Hafa Adai!

PSS secures $4.99M through school infrastructure program. PAGE 2
Voluntary recall for Enfamil Nutramigen. PAGE 3

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Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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'Blunt force trauma killed man'

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The Department of Public Safety and Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services responded to a call reporting two injured individuals at a residence in Finasisu last Thursday.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The man who was killed in his home along Tun Joaquin Doi Road in Finasisu reportedly died of blunt force trauma to the head, while his female partner sustained similar injuries.

With the Department of Public Safety continuing its investigation into the Finasisu homicide reported last Thursday, it has been determined that the man found dead in the old Ladera International

See BLUNT on Page 4

Son remembers Ogumoro's passion for the CNMI's indigenous people

JOY ASICO

Former CNMI Office of Planning and Development director Kodep Ogumoro-Uludong, second from left, received the Spotlight Award on behalf of his mother, Felicidad Taman Ogumoro, given by the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies to recognize her service and commitment to the public and the Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander community during the 5th Annual APAICS Women's Collective Summit on July 27, 2023 in Washington, D.C. Also in the photo are Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP), extreme left, APICS president and chief executive officer Madalene Xuan-Trang Mielke, and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Keone Nakoa.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

If there's one thing Kodep Ogumoro-Uludong remembers most about his mother, Felicidad Taman Ogumoro,

See SON on Page 4

'Donna Flores steered PSS competently with her steady leadership'

PSS

Donna M. Flores, center, the Special Program director of the Public School System, who has been the interim Education commissioner in the last five months, thanked her colleagues and the Board of Education during her last key management meeting last Friday. Flores will return to her current position since the new Education commissioner assumes today.

With Dr. Lawrence Camacho taking over today as the new Education commissioner of the Public Schools System, CNMI education leaders and policymakers are united in praising and thanking Donna M. Flores for ensuring that there was continuous and stable school district leadership in the last five months as

See PSS on Page 4

Guam investigates fatal shooting of Korean visitor, offers $50K reward for information

AP

In this image taken from video, police tape is wrapped around a pole with Tsubaki Towers in the background in Tamuning, Guam, Friday, Jan. 5, 2024, after a fatal shooting on Thursday.

HAGATNA, Guam (AP)— Authorities in the U.S. territory of Guam on Friday vowed to bring to justice those who fatally shot a South Korean visitor in a tourist district.

See GUAM on Page 4

INSIDE

BUSINESS

Cuts and Nails Beauty Salon & Spa has opened in San Jose, Tinian to attend to the island's pampering needs.

PAGE 11

NATION

The Supreme Court said Friday it will decide whether former President Donald Trump can be kept off the ballot because of his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss.

PAGE 12

WORLD

Israel and Lebanon-based Hezbollah traded fire Saturday in one of the heaviest days of cross-border fighting in recent weeks.

PAGE 13

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

PSS secures $4.99M through school infrastructure program

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Public School System has secured a $4.99-million grant it will get over five years through the Supporting America's School Infrastructure program, according to Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) over the weekend.

Sablan disclosed in his e-kilili newsletter that this funding, as the U.S. Department of Education announced on Thursday, is rooted in the concept of Minetgot, the Chamorro term for resilience, and focuses on three objectives: the creation of a comprehensive 10-year school facilities master plan, transitioning to a cloud-based maintenance system, and implementing a maintenance training program for district staff.

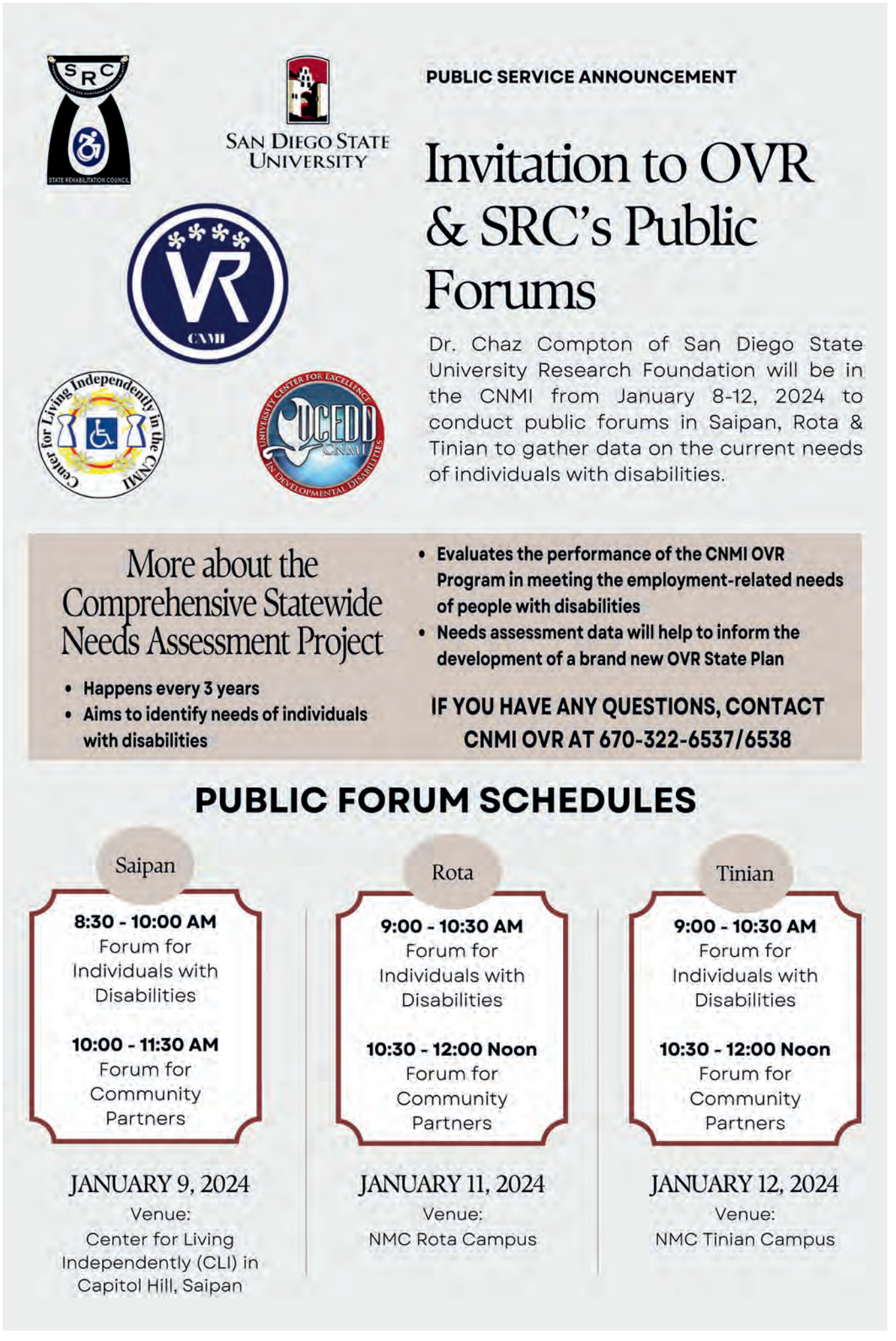
Sablan

Sablan said the facilities master plan will address reducing emergency repair costs, ensuring modern safety standards, and increasing sustainability.

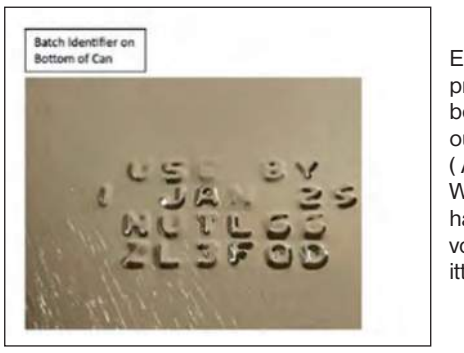
In transitioning to a cloud-based system, PSS plans to centralize data and automate operations for effective facility management, Sablan said.

He said the grant will also allow for investing in staff training to enhance facility safety, promote longevity, and foster job satisfaction.

The U.S. Congress funded the Supporting America's School Infrastructure program through the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023.


SRC
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY
VR
CNMI
Center for Living Independently in the CNMI
UCEDD
CNMI
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT
Invitation to OVR & SRC's Public Forums
Dr. Chaz Compton of San Diego State University Research Foundation will be in the CNMI from January 8-12, 2024 to conduct public forums in Saipan, Rota & Tinian to gather data on the current needs of individuals with disabilities.
More about the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Project
• Happens every 3 years
• Aims to identify needs of individuals with disabilities
• Evaluates the performance of the CNMI OVR Program in meeting the employment-related needs of people with disabilities
• Needs assessment data will help to inform the development of a brand new OVR State Plan
IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, CONTACT CNMI OVR AT 670-322-6537/6538
PUBLIC FORUM SCHEDULES
Saipan
8:30 - 10:00 AM
Forum for Individuals with Disabilities
10:00 - 11:30 AM
Forum for Community Partners
JANUARY 9, 2024
Venue:
Center for Living Independently (CLI) in Capitol Hill, Saipan
Rota
9:00 - 10:30 AM
Forum for Individuals with Disabilities
10:30 - 12:00 Noon
Forum for Community Partners
JANUARY 11, 2024
Venue:
NMC Rota Campus
Tinian
9:00 - 10:30 AM
Forum for Individuals with Disabilities
10:30 - 12:00 Noon
Forum for Community Partners
JANUARY 12, 2024
Venue:
NMC Tinian Campus

Voluntary recall for Enfamil Nutramigen



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS
Enfamil Nutramigen products that were bought online and outside of the CNMI (Amazon.com, Walmart.com, etc.) has been recalled voluntarily by Reckitt/Mead Johnson.

For consumers that are purchasing Enfamil Nutramigen online and outside of the CNMI (Amazon.com, Walmart.com, etc.), Reckitt/Mead Johnson has voluntarily recalled selected batches of Nutramigen that has a UPC Code of 300871239418 or 300871239456 and "Use By Date" of Jan. 1, 2025 due to possible *cronobacter sakazkii* contamination.

Along with the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. Environmental Health Disease Prevention, the CNMI WIC Program has ensured that inventories at participating CNMI WIC vendors and other vendors are not a part of this recall and is not a part of the recalled batches.

Cronobacter bacteria can cause severe, life-threatening infections (sepsis) or meningitis (an inflammation of the membranes that protect the brain and spine). Symptoms of sepsis and meningitis may include poor feeding, irritability, temperature changes, jaundice (yellow skin and whites of the eyes), grunting breaths and abnormal movements. *Cronobacter* infection may also cause bowel damage and may spread through the blood to other parts of the body.

Consumers who purchased Nutramigen should check the bottom of the can to identify whether the batch number is affected. Product with the batch codes listed should not be used. For a refund for on-hand, impacted product, please contact Reckitt/Mead Johnson before product is disposed for total refund processing. Please contact them at 866-534-9986 or by email at consumer.relations@rb.com and they will help verify if this product was impacted. If you have any concerns, contact your health care provider.

For more information regarding this recall or on c*ronobacter* Infection, please see links provided.

■ Cronobacter infection and infants/CDC- https://www.cdc.gov/cronobacter/infection-and-infants.html#:~:text=Here%20are%20steps%20you%20can%20take%20to%20help,milk.%20Clean%2C%20sanitize%2C%20and%20store%20feeding%20items%20safely

■ Enfamil Recall-https://www.enfamil.com/nutramigen-recall-2023/

■ FDA Constituent Update-https://www.fda.gov/food/cfsan-constituent-updates/reckittmead-johnson-nutrition-voluntarily-recalls-certain-nutramigen-hypoallergenic-powdered-infant

■ Handling Infant Formula Safely—https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/handling-infant-formula-safely-what-you-need-know

For more information regarding this matter, call (670) 236-2027 or C670) 236-2028. ***(CHCC)***

NMC business students dive into sustainable business models

NMC

Northern Marianas College business students go hands-on with Capsim 2.0, a sustainability model framed around a forward-thinking approach to business education.

Northern Marianas College business students are taking their learning to the next level with Capsim 2.0, a live simulation platform that pairs students from across the nation to compete to run a business.

The NMC School of Business has been using the Capsim Simulation since 2015, but this cohort is the first to try out Capsim 2.0, a sustainability model framed around a forward-thinking approach to business education. It not only equips students with the necessary skills for the business world, but also instills a sense of responsibility toward sustainability, preparing them to be well-rounded and conscientious business leaders.

Integrating sustainability into the simulation enhances the growing global awareness of environmental and social responsibility. This prepares students to navigate the challenges and opportunities associated with sustainable business practices.

This approach also emphasizes the importance of sustainable practices in the corporate world. Through this, students gained practical experience through a real-world simulation, developed collaboration and leadership skills, learned sustainable practices, and are prepared for future careers with in-demand competencies and progressive learning methods.

"We live in a dynamic environment and these students have gone through their academic journey where they know the importance of teamwork and cross-functional decision-making," said Dr. Barbara Hunter.

She added, "I am excited to see more students take part in this new type of live immersion competition with other colleges nationwide. The School of Business values the synergy that turns into fellowship and the students being able to share their business acumen through knowledge and application, which is important for the workforce."

For more information about NMC's business program, email NMC School of Business interim director Dr. Barbara Hunter at barbara.hunter@marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

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www.developcnmi.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
Monday, January 8, 2024

PURSUANT TO PUBLIC LAW 8-41, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CEDA) THROUGH ITS CHAIRMAN, HEREBY INFORMS THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT THE CEDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024 AT 9:00 A.M. THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE CEDA CONFERENCE ROOM, FIRST FLOOR, CEDA BUILDING, OLEAI SAIPAN. THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING IS AS FOLLOWS:

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
   A. Call to Order
   B. Roll Call
   C. Adoption of Agenda
II. PUBLIC COMMENTS
III. BOARD DELIBERATION & ACTION ON THE HIRING OF CEDA COMPTROLLER
IV EXECUTIVE SESSION
V. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. (Note: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a)(7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/ **FRANCISCO M. RABAULIMAN**
Chairman

MUNICIPAL SCHOLARSHIP OFFICE
P.O Box 5729 CHRB | Saipan, MP 96950 | Capitol Hill, Building #1326 | No. (670) 664-4750

Donna M. Flores, Chairperson | Monique B. Sablan, Vice-Chairperson | Dr. Elizabeth Emma C. Itibus, Member | Diana B. Hocog, Member | Patricia San Nicolas, Member

January 8, 2024

Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9910, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Scholarship Board of Directors is hereby giving notice that it will hold its 2nd regular board meeting on Thursday, January 11th, 2024 at 1:30pm on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the CNMI Scholarship Office Conference Room.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes
V. Public Comments
VI. Old Business
   a. MOA of Nursing School Scholarship (NSS) Program
VII. New Business
   a. Orientation of New Board Member
   b. Award Amounts & Projections
   c. Financial Report
   d. Appeals
   e. NSS Program
   f. Department of Public Lands (DPL) Scholarship
   g. Renaming of Office
VIII. Administrator's Report & Updates
IX. Announcements & Next Meeting
X. Adjournment

/s/ Mildred Sablan-Camacho, CSO Administrator

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Corolla
• 8" Touchscreen Display
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HERE FOR SAIPAN. HERE FOR LIFE.

BLUNT

From page 1

School died of blunt force trauma to the head.

In addition, based on how the body was found, DPS says the victim had been dead within the last 12 to 24 hours before he was found.

During a press conference last Friday, DPS spokesperson Fred Sato said investigators have yet to determine as of press time the murder weapon (if one was used at all), and the motive behind the killing.

"The male died due to blunt force trauma so that's why investigators are looking at every angle—if there was a weapon, if it was physical contact, etc. The motive is still being established as far as the investigation is going. Investigators are still trying to figure out what weapon was used on the victims or if there was a weapon at all. Based on the information I've gathered, investigators are still trying to determine the motive for the incident. We can't determine if it was burglary, a robbery, domestic [violence], or if it was someone they may have had over," he said.

DPS has also yet to disclose whether there were any signs of forced entry, if there was more than one perpetrator, or if the incident was drug- or gang-related, but DPS assures that all angles are being looked into.

"Right now, we don't have any information that could determine whether there was more than one perpetrator, if they were on foot, we don't know if it's gang related, drug related, but all angles are being looked at as far as this investigation goes. ...There were no reported signs of forced entry but because the investigation is still ongoing, we can't say if there was forced entry. If you see this complex, it's beat down. You have windows without bars or screens and it's sort of dilapidated [so] that anyone could get access into it," he said.

Sato also shared that, as of press time, the female victim is still in critical condition.

"Based on reports, the woman had trauma and injuries to her face. Police remain posted at the female victim's room at [the Commonwealth Health Center] to ensure her safety and also should she regain consciousness, investigators can be immediately alerted to conduct an interview with her. But she remains unconscious," Sato said.

In disclosing more details about the gruesome killing during last Friday's press conference, Sato said that 911 received a call last Saturday morning from a woman who stated that there might be injured people in an apartment in Finasisu. It was later determined that the female caller is a colleague of the female victim. Both are teachers at a local private school.

The woman reportedly told police that she panicked at the sight of blood when she looked through one of the home's windows, so she immediately looked for help.

"What we gathered was that the female victim did not show up to work that day, so an associate in the campus called the victim to do a welfare check on her. She could see through the window that there was blood so she, in a panic, immediately looked for someone to help her call for police assistance because of the language barrier," said Sato.

At the scene and immediately upon entering the home, police found traces of blood leading into one of the bedrooms, Sato said. Upon entering the bedroom, police immediately saw a man lying on the floor in a pool of blood, with the female lying nearby and whose face was also covered in blood.

"Officers went inside and approached the room and noticed traces of blood on the floor leading to the bedroom. In the bedroom, police found a male lying on the floor lying in a pool of blood and the woman was seen nearby. Medics immediately provided medical aid to the woman before both victims were transported to the Commonwealth Health Center," he said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

PSS

From page 1

interim PSS chief.

"We are very fortunate that we live and work in a community where education is important, and this has continued on uninterrupted in the last five months when our current Special Education Program director, Donna Flores, has led, guided, and gave her heartfelt commitment and leadership to [PSS]…," said Board of Education chair Antonio L. Borja.

Borja thanked Flores for stepping into the interim role following Dr. Alfred B. Ada's resignation for health reasons.

"Along with our public education stakeholders, I am grateful to…Flores for stepping up at a time when we need a leader who can continue to steer PSS with its initiatives and programs, work with all our schools, with our parents and community. Quite frankly, her service to our school district couldn't be more emphasized by how she displayed a remarkably high level of professionalism, respect, and steady leadership that hears and listens to her peers," Borja said.

BOE secretary/treasurer Gregory Pat Borja, who also chairs the BOE Fiscal, Personnel and Administration Committee, described Flores as "very competent" who took her additional responsibility "very seriously."

"I think Ms. Flores was very competent at what she did. She took her responsibility very seriously. She helped look at the system from a very big picture point-of-view, to see what changes are needed to help [PSS] run more efficiently, and I think she covered that," Borja said.

"I thought that she did a great job. I'm really thankful to her for stepping into that position: I know it was a challenge…coming into a position…when things or some uncertainty is on the line. But again, she basically filled her own shoes. I think she's going to be leaving those shoes for someone else to fill now," Borja added. "We're sad to see her go. However, to me personally, I'm happy to see her return to the Special Education Program because she is needed there because she has wealth of experience and expertise in that field as well. All in all, I want to thank her because she did a great job."

Expertise

School leaders recognized Flores for her ability to communicate with all stakeholders because of her breadth of experience.

"Her biggest strength is her willingness to listen to people and not to judge immediately. To listen is to let the schools run schools, and let the principals run the program," said Vince Dela Cruz, the high schools' principal representative and current Saipan Southern High School principal.

Dela Cruz describes Flores as "a down-to-earth person who understands the schools' situation."

"She knows her role… as a support system. Although she is the leader of the system, she understands that she is there to support the programs and the schools," adds Dela Cruz.

Middle Schools principals representative James A. Sablan, who has worked with Flores for many years now, describes her as having a "high level of professionalism" and as a "strong leader."

"She was able to steady the ship. There was no chaos during her time, nothing had changed. She succeeded in continuing the current trend," said Sablan, who is also the principal of Dandan Middle School. Her "calmness and willingness to listen" ensured that schools operate continuously without interruptions. "She held it up very well because of her strong sense of professionalism and work ethic. She has worked with us [for the past five months] to make it easier for us to run our public schools."

Elementary Schools principal representative Paulette Tomokane said, "Mrs. Donna Flores is well-recognized for her unwavering support throughout her term as interim commissioner of Education. She played a crucial role in supporting our educational system to move forward with the least disruption. Her leadership, expertise, and collaboration inspired trust and confidence among the school and central office leaders. Her collaboration and trust-building efforts ensured that all stakeholders felt valued and included, leading to improved outcomes. Her willingness to listen and approachable demeanor are qualities I truly appreciate as a principal and elementary school principal representative."

Tomokane is also the principal of San Vicente Elementary School.

Respect

In her last key management meeting last Friday, Flores thanked the school system leadership and the BOE.

"Thank you for all your support, for giving me respect and respect for this office. We are all here to serve our children and the community. I couldn't have done it without respect for the job that I do, and for what we do, as a PSS community. I would have done it for you." Flores told PSS' key management.

She added, "Let's welcome Dr. Camacho. He is excited and is looking forward to working with all of you."

The BOE is the policymaking and governing body of PSS. The BOE hires and has the supervisory authority over the commissioner of education.

Camacho will formally assume his post today as Education commissioner.

Flores currently serves as the PSS-SPED director. The BOE unanimously selected her as interim Education commissioner last Sept. 3, 2023.

She did not apply for the position when the BOE announced the application process for the commissioner of education, who also serves as the chief state school superintendent.

The SPED Program is the single largest program under PSS, with its stakeholders accounting for about 11 % of the overall PSS student population. Its employees, for their part, represent 21% of PSS' total workforce. ***(PR)***

GUAM

From page 1

The shooting occurred shortly before 8 p.m. Thursday when the traveler and his wife were walking toward Tsubaki Towers, a hotel on Guam's popular Tumon Bay, from nearby Gun Beach, KUAM-TV reported, citing police.

An older model, dark-colored SUV approached them from behind, Guam Police Chief Stephen Ignacio said at a news conference.

A passenger holding a gun got of the vehicle and demanded they hand over their belongings, Ignacio said, adding, "A struggle ensued."

The victim was taken to Guam Regional Medical City, where he died from his injuries the next morning. He had been visiting Guam while celebrating his retirement.

The Guam Visitors Bureau has offered a $50,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible.

Guam is an island of about 170,000 people approximately 3,900 miles (6,275 kilometers) west of Hawaii.

Its warm weather has made it a favored tourist destination for many nearby Asian nations. South Korea sent nearly 270,000 travelers to Guam in the first nine months of last year, more than any other country.

The island is also home to major Air Force and Navy installations. Its economy relies heavily on tourism and U.S. government spending.

In Kook Kim, the Korean consulate's head of mission, urged Guam's officials to act quickly.

"Arrest the suspect in no time and carry out a thorough investigation to bring them to justice," he said at the news conference.

Carl Gutierrez, the CEO of the Guam Visitors Bureau, assured visitors that Guam is safe.

"We invite them here to a safe destination. We want to ensure that," he said.

Guam's governor met with the late victim's wife.

"I consoled her, I hugged her, I cried with her. I prayed with her, knowing as a wife and a mother some of the pain that she is going through," Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero said in a video message posted on Instagram.

She urged the people of Guam to come forward with information that would help solve the case.

"Guam remains a safe place, and we are continuing to do everything we can to keep it safe, not just for our people, but our visitors," she said.

SON

From page 1

it was her passion for the indigenous people of the CNMI and upholding their rights as guaranteed under the Covenant, which outlines the CNMI's relationship with the United States.

Ogumoro-Uludong, who is the former CNMI Office of Planning and Development director, said Thursday it was his mother's vision that guided her work, whether as a legislator, a government employee, or as a private citizen.

He said his mother often repeated in her speeches and presentations that "a strong, sustainable Commonwealth, where the right to control the resources and the destiny of our islands, remains in the hands of our native people, and where an improved quality of life is enjoyed by all those who call our islands home."

Ogumoro, 74, passed away at her home on Saipan last Wednesday at 7:45pm. She succumbed to peritoneal cancer. She has four children and five grandchildren.

Ogumoro-Uludong said funeral services for his mother will be held on Jan. 13 at the Mount Carmel Cathedral.

It was only in July last year when the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies awarded Ogumoro the Spotlight Award to recognize her service and commitment to the public and the Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander community. Ogumoro-Uludong traveled to Washington, D.C. to attend the 5th Annual APAICS Women's Collective Summit on July 27, 2023 in Washington, D.C. to receive the award on his mother's behalf.

The Spotlight Award is given to an Asian American or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander woman for breaking barriers and for outstanding leadership in elected office.

APAICS president and chief executive officer Madalene Xuan-Trang Mielke said the award recognized Ogumoro's work to address poverty and uplift women, and as the first female of Carolinian heritage to be elected to the CNMI House of Representatives.

In 1978, Ogumoro became the first female of Carolinian heritage to be elected to the CNMI House representing Precinct 5. She served in the government of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the private sector, and local government for over 50 years.

In 2021, the CNMI House presented her a House resolution that paid tribute and commended her for more than 50 years of distinguished service to the people of the Commonwealth. Family members received the resolution on her behalf.

Mayor 'RB' Camacho
FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE

Action Group Meeting
Establishment of Action Group consisting of key regulatory agencies to address the urgency to act on hazardous sites around the island

Marpi Public Cemetery Working Group
Establishment of Working Committee to work towards opening existing public cemeteries sites and making them available to address grave shortages

Meeting with Religious Leaders
Island religious leaders get together with Mayor RB Camacho to discuss matters on the Marpi Public Cemetery and other concerns.

Dog Control Program
DOG CONTROL PROGRAM registered more than 1,000 dogs and have more than 1,100 dogs have been euthanized

The Saipan Mayor's Office has had an eventful year and despite the many hurdles he has faced, Saipan Mayor Ramon Blas "RB" Camacho remains focused on ensuring the safety of the community, each village, and a clean island.

It's been a year since Camacho has taken office and he has accomplished a great deal for the community. However, he has also been subject to a great deal of controversy as well.

Despite that, Camacho said he remains focused on his goals which is a safe community, safe villages, and a clean island.

"From the beginning, since my campaign, I've never changed my priority and that's permanent with me. I stay focused on my mission. The people put me in this office to do my job so now I am channeling myself to the community. The community is the strongest voice to me and I stand by my principle to serve the people," he said.

Camacho shared one of his biggest projects in the past year has been cleaning up Chalan Kanoa, which is known for its illegal dumping sites.

So far, Camacho said his staff has been in the CK village for a while, extracting all junk car, scraps, debris, trash, used tires, basically trash illegally dumped there that have become an eyesore.

"I will not move on from a village until we are sure that the village is clean and I'm satisfied. We currently have two teams there at CK," he said.

Once all villages have been cleaned, Camacho said, he will move on to the next phase of his village beautification campaign which is to set up an inspection team that will help penalize anyone caught illegally dumping in the villages.

"We will also set up an inspection committee afterwards where we will cite people found illegally dumping trash in our villages. Our move is to clean up and then we will do inspections," he said.

Another project Camacho is proud of is work done to clear all vegetation that covered stop signs in the villages.

"Before, you weren't able to see traffic signs because they were covered by vegetation. But I made it a priority to have those cleaned up," he said.

When asked what his biggest project for the upcoming year will be, Camacho shared that he will be doubling down on establishing a relationship between his office and different ethnic groups on Saipan.

"I'm currently making schedules with different ethnic groups. I want to meet with the leaders of these groups. I'm asking them all to please come to the Saipan Mayor's Office. My office wants to work with all ethnic groups in the community so we can all sit down and discuss community issues and how to better improve these issues for the betterment of the villages and even businesses," he said.

In conjunction with this, Camacho said he also wants to establish a relationship with the business community within each village.

"I'm going to be sending out my staff to check all these businesses in each precinct because I want the owners to meet with me and establish a working relationship so we can work together on community issues," he said.

Camacho said these relationships are important as it promotes safety for the Saipan community and is the first step toward establishing the upcoming Neighborhood Watch program.

"This island is too big for one mayor. I need help and I want to work closely [with the community] to curb these negative activities within our community. The solution to our problems is to work together. My goal this coming year is to bring in the community so we can finally launch the neighborhood watch program," he said.

As for other ongoing projects, Camacho shared he is currently working with some instructors to develop a Summer program for the youth within each village who will be out of school soon.

"We want to establish a program to reach out to our youth, occupy and engage them during the summer. We wanted to establish a summer program catered to our youth who will be out of school soon," he said.

Meanwhile, Camacho shared that the Saipan Mayor's Office's Adopt-a-Place Program also continues.

"For those still interested in adopting a place that they can manage and beautify twice a month, that program is still open," he said.

As an extension, Camacho is also looking at a similar program where his office provides funding to maintain basketball courts within the villages.

"We've identified that we have 45 basketball courts on the island and we are currently exploring sources of fundings to see how we can revitalize the basketball courts on our island. Some courts have been adopted by volunteers to maintain them. I continue to ask the business and local community's help.

There are many more project and programs accomplished by the Saipan Mayor's Office in the past year but overall, Camacho said the biggest challenge however was getting cooperation from the CNMI government.

"The biggest challenge [I've faced] is cooperation among the government. That is a big challenge. As a mayor, I want to be open and I will humbly ask the administration and the various departments to please work together because we have only one mission—to serve the people," he said.

Lastly, Camacho said all he can do is continue to do his best for the community he serves.

"I cannot really grade myself, but I've tried my best and I will continue to do my best. This is not an easy job. I no longer have time [for myself] because everywhere I go, I have members of the community wanting to talk with me. But I enjoy this, entertaining the community's concerns," he said. ***(KIMBERLY B. ESMORES)***

Working together for a safe village, safe community, and clean island!

Other Milestones under Mayor RB Camacho's leadership

- **More than 2,500 Municipal Identification cards** have been issued
- **More than 260 marriages** have been officiated
- Initiating Village Clean Up Projects to aid the community with the removal of residential debris in the villages – starting with Chalan Kanoa village
- Establishment of a Farm Registry program to support Mayor RB's goal of growing the agricultural industry by reducing the operational costs of farming
- Restoration of the San Antonio Boy Scout Memorial
- Installation of the John F Kennedy statue at the Center for Living Independently facility to signify President Kennedy's instrumental role when he signed the Develop mental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act into law

International Exchange Program
International Exchange Program have resumed the student exchange programs with 3 total cycles so far that catered to 26 exchange students
- Mayor RB Camacho also strengthened ties with Mayor Ito during a recent visit to Katori City

Mayor RB Camacho visits Palau
After visiting Palau's successful recycling plant and agricultural facilities, Mayor RB Camacho had meaningful discussions to bring these systems to the CNMI with the President of the Republic Palau, Surangel Whipps Jr.

Adopt-A-Place
9 prominent community locations have been adopted and will be maintained by non-profit organizations

Farm to Table
Establishment of a Farm to Table program and donated materials to the Center for Living Independently to encourage its clients to expand their knowledge in farming

MOS Operations:
OPERATIONS team fulfilled more than 2,400 Customer Service Requests

Home Numbering
HOME NUMBERING PROGRAM issued more than 1,200 numerical stencils to residents for their houses

Senator recognizes GCC Cosmetology students for public service

Guam Community College Cosmetology instructors and students were recognized last Wednesday, Jan. 3, with a legislative certificate for their hard work and time in the "Taking Hair and Combing Together for Relief" feel good community effort, post Typhoon Mawar.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
From left, Guam Community College School of Trades and Professional Services associate dean Dorothy Lou Duenas, GCC Cosmetology completer Keith Nauta, GCC Cosmetology Program instructor Janice Aguon, Sen. Dwayne T.D. San Nicolas, Cosmetology completers Ronalyn Macagba and Momilani Mafnas, and San Nicolas chief of staff Ursula Delos Reyes.

The legislative certificate sponsored by Sen. Dwayne T.D. San Nicolas recognizes their outstanding contributions to the community outreach clinics; and commended instructors and students for their efforts in assisting our community after the devastation of the typhoon.

The effort started on June 20, 2023 and ended last July 25 with 315 free haircuts to Guam residents in need of a break from the reality of post-typhoon clean up and recovery. Altogether the dollar value on the haircuts reached $11,025.

Receiving a certificate on Wednesday included students: Keith Nauta, Harry Cruz, James Jones, Jeremiah Kintoki, Rolani Rivera, Momilani Mafnas, Ronalyn Macagba, Justine Chargualaf, Hailey Dirige, Jerrica Manley, Deanna Weger, Rihanna Balajadia, Dominic Cruz, Julio Torres, Myka Guiking, Jhontel Dorion, Kristin Chloe Darapiza, Hyobin Chun, Leanne Consolacion, Makailah Taliman, Juliana Santos, Angeli Dayrit, Alexandra Pajela. Instructor Janice Trina Aguon was also presented with a certificate. ***(GCC)***

GCC extends Spring 2024 registration period

There is now even more time to get your future started at Guam Community College. Registration is extended through Friday, Jan. 12, 2024. New and returning students can either register online at GuamCC.edu or in person at the Administration Building (2000) between 8am and 5pm, Monday through Friday. Existing students can still register for classes online using their MyGCC login credentials.

To complete your registration process, please provide the following:

- Valid photo identification card
- High School transcripts
- Shot record
- Tax Year 2021 documents (for financial aid)

The last day to add or drop a class, make a payment or get on a payment plan is also Friday, Jan. 12, 2024 at 5pm.

For more information about registration, contact the GCC Admissions Office at (671) 735-5531 or email gcc.registrar@guamcc.edu. ***(GCC)***

Joseph Seo graduates from Berea College

BEREA, KY—Joseph Seo of Saipan received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Berea College last Dec. 20, 2023, as part of the 77 students who graduated during the college's mid-year recognition ceremony.

Berea alumna Dr. Betty Hyatt Olinger addressed the students, who represented 21 states and three different countries.

Berea College, the first interracial and coeducational college in the south, focuses on learning, labor and service. The college only admits academically promising students with limited financial resources, primarily from Kentucky and Appalachia, although students come from 45 states and 70 countries.

Every Berea student receives a Tuition Promise Scholarship, which means no Berea student pays for tuition. As one of nine federally recognized work colleges, Berea's students work at least 10 hours a week to earn money for books, housing, and meals. ***(PR)***

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)
NMHC IFB 2024-003

(This ad is paid by NMHC by HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE: February 09, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

DANDAN WATER TANK REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Project Package will be available on December 26, 2023, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays. A non-refundable payment of One-Hundred Dollars ($100.00) is required for each set of the project package. Payment must be made payable to NMHC and receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the project package at the reception counter.

The provisions on the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A Mandatory Pre-Bid Conference will be held at the NMHC Central Office located in Garapan, Saipan on **January 09, 2024, 10:00 a.m.** In addition, a Mandatory site Visit/Inspection of the project site will be conducted immediately after the Pre-Bid Conference. Failure to attend both the Mandatory Pre-bid conference and the Mandatory site Visit/Inspection will be considered a non-responsive bidder.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-9447 or via email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net during business hours, 7:30am – 4:30pm Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

/s/ MERCED "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
NMHC RFP 2024-001

(This ad is paid for NMHC with HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE: February 09, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

INSTALLATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION (CUC) UNDERGROUND POWER SERVICE TO CRITICAL LOADS PROJECT

Proposal Package will be available on December 26, 2023, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays. A non-refundable payment of One-Hundred Dollars ($100.00) is required for each set of the project package. Payment must be made payable to NMHC and receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the project package at the reception counter.

The provisions on the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A Mandatory Pre-Proposal Meeting will be held at the NMHC Tinian Field Office located at the NMC Campus, San Jose, Tinian, on **January 11, 2024, 10:00 a.m.** In addition, a Mandatory site Visit/Inspection of the project site will be conducted immediately after the Pre-Proposal Meeting. Failure to attend both the Mandatory Pre-Proposal meeting and the Mandatory site Visit/Inspection will be considered a non-responsive proposer/offeror.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-9447 or via email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net during business hours, 7:30am – 4:30pm Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director
Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC)

/s/ MERCED "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)
NMHC IFB 2024-005

(This ad is paid by NMHC by HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME: February 08, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

Rehabilitation of the Sinapalo Youth Center

Project package will be available on **December 29, 2023,** at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays. A non-refundable payment of **One Hundred Dollars ($100.00)** is required for each set of the project package. Payment must be made payable to NMHC and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the project package at the reception counter.

The provisions of the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A Mandatory Pre-Bid conference will be at the NMHC Field Office in Rota located in Sinapalo, Rota on **January 19, 2024, 2:00 p.m.** Failure to attend the Mandatory Pre-bid conference will be considered a non-responsive bidder. Immediately after the Mandatory Pre-Bid conference, bidders are required to join the NMHC Personnel to visit and examine the project site. Failure to attend the project site visit will be considered a non-responsive bidder. Inquiries regarding this solicitation must be addressed in writing to Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer via email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net or mail at P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 9650 or via fax at (670)234-9021, no later than 4:00 p.m. January 30, 2023.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer, at (670)234-6866/9447 or email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

/s/ MERCED "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)
NMHC IFB 2024-004

(This ad is paid by NMHC by HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE: February 13, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

Construction of New 1.0 MG Kagman Water Tank Project

Project Package will be available on December 28, 2023, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays. A non-refundable payment of One-Hundred Dollars ($100.00) is required for each set of the project package. Payment must be made payable to NMHC and receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the project package at the reception counter.

The provisions on the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A Mandatory Pre-Bid Conference will be held at the NMHC Central Office Conference located in Garapan, Saipan on **January 09, 10:00 a.m.** In addition, a Mandatory site Visit/Inspection of the project site will be conducted immediately after the Pre-Bid Conference. Failure to attend both the Mandatory Pre-bid conference and the Mandatory site Visit/Inspection will be considered a non-responsive bidder.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-9447 or via email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net during business hours, 7:30am – 4:30pm Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

/s/ MERCED "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

OPENING DATE: December 28, 2023 **CLOSING DATE: January 19, 2024 TIME: 4:00 P.M.**

NMHC JVA No.	Positions:	Salary
2024-004	CDBG-DR Accountant	$$25,000.00-$30,000.00 per annum- UNGRADED

Employment application form, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information may be accessed at www.nmhcgov.net or www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com.

Applicants may submit their applications through the following options: Submission at the at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan; or at the Drop Box located in front of the NMHC Central Office building; or email application and documents to officemanager@nmhcgov.net.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre-employment drug screening.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-6866/9447or by email to officemanager@nmhcgov.net . NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

Multi-agency rescue operation successfully saves 6 boaters near Guam

USCG

U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, in partnership with Guam Fire Rescue and U.S. Navy Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25, successfully conducted a search-and-rescue operation for a distressed vessel 30 miles northwest of Guam, on Jan. 6, 2023, saving six boaters.

SANTA RITA, Guam—U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, in partnership with Guam Fire Rescue and U.S. Navy Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25, successfully conducted a search-and-rescue operation for a distressed vessel 30 miles northwest of Guam, on Jan. 6, 2023, saving six boaters.

"This successful rescue operation highlights the strength of our partnerships and our commitment to saving lives at sea. Working seamlessly with our partners at Guam Fire Rescue, U.S. Navy HSC-25, and other agencies, we ensured a swift and effective response despite the conditions, including scattered showers and 6-foot waves," said Lt. Chelsea Garcia, the search and rescue mission coordinator for the operation. "Our coordinated efforts demonstrate our collective resolve to uphold maritime safety and security."

The Joint Rescue Sub-Center, operated by U.S. Coast Guard watchstanders in Guam, received an urgent notification from Guam Fire Rescue about a 23-foot recreational vessel with six people aboard, initially identified as nationals of the People's Republic of China, experiencing severe difficulties. Reportedly, the vessel was taking on water, and all aboard were wearing personal flotation devices.

Watchstanders immediately diverted the U.S. Coast Guard Station Apra Harbor 45-foot Response Boat-Medium crew to the location with an estimated time of arrival of 40 minutes. Simultaneously, they issued an urgent marine information broadcast, and the U.S. Navy's HSC-25 was requested to join the rescue effort. The Navy squadron promptly accepted the mission, showcasing the strong partnership and interoperability between the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy units in the region.

The HSC-25 MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter crew located the vessel with all six people still aboard. Due to the critical condition of the vessel, which was taking on water in multiple locations, the rescue crew deemed it unsafe to tow. The 45-foot RB-M crew skillfully transferred all six survivors aboard their vessel, ensuring their safety and well-being. The vessel remains adrift, and anyone in the area should maintain a sharp lookout to avoid a collision.

The watchstanders notified personnel from agencies, including the U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service, Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Customs, and Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency. The RB-M crew transported the survivors to Hagåtña, where HSI officials met them at the pier for further care and assessment.

Weather conditions for the operation included east-northeast winds blowing at 13 to 16 knots, scattered showers, and wave heights of around six feet. No watches or warnings are in effect.

This incident serves as a reminder of the dangers mariners face and the importance of wearing life jackets and having reliable communication devices aboard the vessel. The U.S. Coast Guard continues to stand ready, in partnership with local, federal, and military agencies, to respond to maritime emergencies and protect life at sea. ***(USCG)***

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-002

AGINGAN WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT IMPROVEMENTS

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The work consists of furnishing all labor, supervision, equipment, materials and supplies for the construction of various improvements within the Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) for the project referred to as the AGINGAN WWTP IMPROVEMENTS, Saipan, CNMI under Project No. S18-065 and Project No. S20-079.

The work generally includes, but is not limited to:

Project No. S18-065
Installation of the owner-furnished primary screen within 120 calendar days after Notice to Proceed is issued. Additionally, replacement of the clarifier drive; rehabilitation of the headworks includes replacement of the weir gates to stop gate, a ½-ton hand crank hoist/crane; clarifier bypass; electrical service rehabilitation, replacement of the existing Motor Control Center (MCC), installation of a generator automatic transfer switch (ATS) and digester decanter improvements. The work shall be done in accordance with Project No. S18-065 Plans and Specifications.

Project No. S20-079
Provision of temporary facilities including bypass pumping; furnishing and installing new Vortex Grit Removal Equipment and headworks slide gates, which will require demolition of certain elements within and improvements to the existing headworks channel and deck area; replacement of the existing surface aerator equipment in the North/South Aeration Tanks and Aerobic Digester Tank with a new surface aerator equipment which will require modifications to the existing concrete tank structures; replacement of existing pipe supports for the Aeration Basin influent piping; associated electrical, instrumentation, and control improvements; demobilization; and all other work described in Project No. S20-079 Plans and Specifications.

The work shall be done without disruption to the daily operation of the wastewater system.

CUC requires the Project to be completed within 820 calendar days from the date of the award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 27, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-24-002, Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 18, 2024,** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States, Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 (ChST) on December 28, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer – via email at larry.manacop@cucgov.org, and Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM • WEBSITE: HTTPS: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport
"Car Rental Concession"

Request for Proposals
for: CPA-RFP-001-24
CPA Concession No. CRS-2023-01

The Commonwealth Ports Authority ("CPA" or "Authority") is soliciting proposals for the award of one (1) concession granting the privilege to provide motor vehicle rental services to the traveling public (including the provision of insurance related to motor vehicles rented in the operation of such motor vehicle rental services) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport ("Car Rental Concession"). The successful proposer will be expected to provide motor vehicle rental services in accordance with its concession and concession agreement at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport for a period of two years with an option upon entering into a concession agreement with the Authority.

The date of issuance of CPA-Concession No. CRS-2023-01 is **December 6, 2023**, and it can be obtained at the issuing office: CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950, Second floor of Arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport.

Proposals must be addressed to Commonwealth Ports Authority, Attn: Car Rental Concessions Evaluation Committee, CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950; and submitted to and received by the CPA Administration Office (second floor of arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport) **by or before 4:00 p.m. on January 9, 2024**, at which time the proposal period shall expire. Proposals must be accompanied with a non-refundable administrative fee of $100.00. Payment shall be made in cash, credit card, or cashier's check payable to the Commonwealth Ports Authority to defray the costs associated with handling and considering the proposal. Proposals are not required to include a prepaid minimum concession fee.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to cancel this RFP and to reject any and all proposals in accordance with its Concession Regulations (NMIAC Chapter 40-70).

/s/
LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ. F0122
THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL A. WHITE, LLC
POST OFFICE BOX 5222
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS 96950
TEL: (670) 234-6547
FAX: (670) 235-9537
ATTORNEYS FOR Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION,	]	CIVIL ACTION NO. 07-436
Plaintiff,	]	
-v-	]	
Henry O. Ogo Defendant.	]	

THIRD AMENDED NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on September 16, 2008, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all of the right, title, and interest of Defendant in and to the following property: Lot No. 345 R 321, situated in Sinapalo I, Rota, Northern Mariana Island, containing an area of 950 square meters, more or less, as shown on the Division of Lands and Survey Official Cadastral Plat no. 345 R 07 dated July 1, 1984, the description therein being incorporated herein by reference.

Date, Time, and Place of Sale. The sale will be held on Friday, February 2, 2024, at the hour of 1:30 p.m., at the Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, Joeten Center, Susupe, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public.

Terms and Conditions of Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

DATED, this 27th day of December, 2023:

/s/
MICHAEL A. WHITE,
Auctioneer

MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ. F0122
THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL A. WHITE, LLC
POST OFFICE BOX 5222
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS 96950
TEL: (670) 234-6547
FAX: (670) 235-9537
ATTORNEY FOR Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Estates of	]	CIVIL ACTION NO. 04-0498 and consolidated case (C.A. No. 07-0289)
MATEO M. TAISACAN and SABINA M. TAISACAN, Deceased.	]	

FOURTH AMENDED NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all the right, title, and interest of the Estates of Mateo M. Taisacan and Sabina M. Taisacan in and to the following property: an agricultural homestead situated in Ginalagan, Rota, Northern Mariana Islands, designated as Tract no. 22127, containing an area of 25,000 square meters, more or less, as shown on the Division of Lands and Surveys' Official Survey Plat no. 2066/79 dated December 20, 1984.

Date, Time, and Place of Sale. The sale will be held on Friday, February 2, 2024, at the hour of 1:30 p.m., at the Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, Joeten Center, Susupe, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public.

Terms and Conditions of Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

DATED, this 27th day of December, 2023:

/s/
MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ., R-0122
Attorney for Administratix

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

'No one is safe if they had any hand in' Oct. 7

For eight years, the U.S. State Department has offered a reward of up to $5 million for information on the whereabouts of Saleh Arouri, a Hamas terrorist whose hands were dripping red.

This week, Israel found him.

Arouri was killed on Tuesday with two other Hamas military leaders in an explosion outside of Beirut in Lebanon. Israeli officials wouldn't comment on the development, but The New York Times reported that U.S. and other sources "ascribed the attack" to the Jewish state.

"No one is safe if they had any hand in planning, raising money for or carrying out" the Oct. 7 attacks, an unnamed U.S. official told the Times. "This is just the beginning, and it'll go on for years."

It's important to note that Arouri had a bloody resume. The State Department said that he had been "linked to several terrorist attacks, hijackings and kidnappings." One such crime was the 2014 abduction and murder of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank, including one who was also an American citizen.

Arouri was involved in coordinating cooperation between Iran and its terror proxy Hezbollah.

"Arouri worked with Yahya Sinwar, Hamas' chief in Gaza, in recent years to link the group's military wing more closely to Iran, which, regional security officials say, most likely helped the group develop some of the capabilities it used in the Oct. 7 attack," The Times reports.

In other words, he was knee deep in carrying out a barbaric military operation against Israeli civilians that left more than 1,200 innocents dead and led to the kidnapping of more than 200 men, women and children whom Hamas would use as bargaining chips. He helped plan a gruesome assault that singled out women for sexual violence, mutilation and torture and was "systemic and unprecedented in its cruelty," as one Israeli witness described it.

Israeli forces went on high alert after the death of Arouri in anticipation that Hezbollah might retaliate. Critics of Israel maintain that the attack will escalate the violence, but Hezbollah has been shelling northern Israel with missiles from Lebanon since the Oct. 7 massacre. Who is escalating what? These are the same critics who turn a blind eye to Hamas hiding military targets among civilian populations.

It's just as likely that Israel's targeted operation sends a message of steely resolve to those who wish to destroy the Jewish state. Israel has made clear that it won't be cowed into a ceasefire that allows its enemies to rearm and recuperate in order to terrorize innocents once again. Arouri ran but he couldn't hide. They that sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind.

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America spreads the wealth—and redistributes it, too

By TYLER COWEN
Bloomberg Opinion

With assistance from Justin Fox. Tyler Cowen is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist, a professor of economics at George Mason University and host of the* Marginal Revolution *blog.*

I have news for you: The United States is becoming more redistributionist. Whether you like it or not.

The broader historical trends show that the U.S. tax-and-transfer system is getting more progressive, including in recent years. And the U.S. government is increasingly redistributing wealth to the bottom half of the income distribution.

This portrait belies the common view that the U.S. doesn't have a "real" welfare state, at least as compared to, say, the Nordic countries. Writers from left-leaning perspectives frequently claim that the U.S. has "gutted" its welfare programs—even former President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, promised to "end welfare as we know it."

The more accurate picture, less exciting though it may be, is that there is income redistribution in the U.S., either because voters think it is the right thing to do or because they hope to gain themselves from such a system. And as the U.S. increases its wealth, it is redistributing more of it.

It's not crazy to believe that the U.S. tax system has become less progressive over the years. Before the tax reforms under former President Ronald Reagan, the top marginal rate was 70%. It fell for a while to 28%, and more recently has hovered in the 40s.

Nonetheless, a look at the entire tax-and-transfer system—and a consideration of income classes beyond the very top earners—reveals the system's increasing progressivity.

The best information indicates that transfer income is rising over time, one example being the increasing numbers of states accepting the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. Even following the Clinton-era welfare reforms, the real resources that U.S. governments (at all levels) sent to the poor continued to increase. Welfare itself became more temporary, but aid for food and child care, among other needs, rose in real value.

In a recent study, Thomas Coleman and David A. Weisbach of the University of Chicago focus on research of tax-and-transfer progressivity and establish some ground rules for judging its reliability: It should measure income comprehensively; look at both taxes and transfers; examine the issue over decades; and make their data available. Under these criteria, only three studies qualify. After scrutinizing that research, Coleman and Weisbach conclude:

Methodological choices produce some differences in the size of their estimates and the size of the trends, but the central story in all these studies is the same: the dominant change in the tax and transfer system over the past half-century has been an increase in transfers to the bottom. … All three studies show that the tax and transfer system has become more progressive and more redistributive.

If you are wondering: Yes, among those three studies are the data work of the academics Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, typically considered a left-leaning source, as well as the work of Gerald Auten and David Splinter, both of whom work for the U.S. government and whose work has been embraced by some conservative and libertarian commentators. These sources do not agree on every question, and there has been a recent debate on whether the income share of the top 1% has been rising or holding steady. But on the growing redistribution toward the bottom half of the U.S. income distribution, there is general accord.

As a share of national income, total transfers have gone up almost threefold—from 5.2% in 1966 to 15.3% in 2019. It is noteworthy, however, that total transfers to the bottom quintile peaked in 1975 in percentage terms, though they continued to rise in absolute terms. Governments at all levels in the U.S. take special care to redistribute income to people in the middle quintiles, perhaps because they are more likely to vote than are the poor.

It's also worth noting that the top marginal tax rate of 70% was never entirely binding; effective rates of taxation were lower than they looked. (I recall my father being given the use of a series of "company cars" in the 1970s largely to avoid taxable income.) More recently, in 2020, although published marginal income tax rates were lower, the top 10% of earners paid for 74% of the income tax burden, and the top quarter paid for 89%. Unlike most European nations, the U.S. does not have a value-added tax to shift a big part of the burden back onto the middle class.

Cliches about the U.S. are easy to come by. While conservatives like to suggest that income redistribution is by its very nature anti-American, progressives say that America is uniquely cruel in its rejection of the welfare state. Neither narrative is quite correct. As America gets more wealthy, the data show, it is redistributing more of its wealth.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

For a better foreign policy in 2024, let's be more like Taylor Swift

By ELIZABETH SHACKELFORD
Chicago Tribune

Elizabeth Shackelford is a foreign affairs columnist for the Chicago Tribune*. She was previously a U.S. diplomat and is* the author of The Dissent Channel: American Diplomacy in a Dishonest Age.

"My team is losing, battered and bruising./ I see the high-fives between the bad guys." Taylor Swift's "Miss Americana & the Heartbreak Prince" song is a critique of America's domestic politics, but it could well be our theme song on the world stage today too, as many at home and abroad talk of America's decline.

Some pundits and experts speak of a multipolar world in which many global powers hold sway. Others assert we've shifted to a world of two competing superpowers, with America countered by a rising China.

The one thing they seem to agree on is that the American century is over, with the United States no longer dictating the path of world events. This comes against a backdrop of a more violent world, with 2022 and 2023 seeing more conflict than any other years since the end of the Cold War, according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program. All of this threatens American, and global, security.

However, as Swift, a global megastar, has demonstrated, a setback need not precipitate a downfall. If anyone knows how to land an epic comeback, it's her. She might not be an authority in foreign policy, but she understands relationships, and at its core, that's what international affairs is all about.

While talent has been an essential factor to her success, that alone wouldn't generate the kind of loyalty Swift inspires and the kind of influence she wields the world over. What separates her from her peers is authenticity, credibility and honesty. In a world where lesser pop stars feign perfection, Swift exposes her flaws and holds herself accountable for them. A savvy influencer, she knows this is what her audience wants: music that tells her real story.

This is what makes her the world's biggest superstar today. If America wants to be the world's biggest superstar state, it ought to lean into those values too.

To start, it takes some humility and recognition of the role we played in our own decline. We are the "Castles Crumbling" that Swift sings of. "Once, I was the great hope for a dynasty./ Crowds would hang on my words, and they trusted me./ Their faith was strong, but I pushed it too far./ … And here I sit alone, behind walls of regret/ Falling down like promises that I never kept."

Many countries today won't follow our lead because of the promises we haven't kept. Take the climate crisis, in which the United States urges developing countries to give up fossil fuels, even as our own government expands oil and gas drilling and still subsidizes the fossil fuel industry. We need to lead by our example, not our demands.

Our credibility also suffers when we don't hold others to account. Our partners face no consequences for thumbing their noses at us, and the resulting impunity means that those we support directly harm our interests.

Consider Saudi Arabia, where America has bet that, if we provide military hardware and support, Saudis will help us by keeping oil prices in check. For this, we repeatedly turned a blind eye to the kingdom's horrific human rights record. But Saudi Arabia has used OPEC to slash oil production repeatedly anyway, in cahoots with Russia just when we needed increased pressure on Moscow. This bet hasn't paid off.

Swift's Saudi Arabia was Kanye West, now known as Ye, who bullied and embarrassed her. At first, Swift thought she needed to make amends, even though he was the one acting badly. That only fueled his bad behavior (as impunity always does). His offenses became a liability, so she learned from this and walked away.

"There I was giving you a second chance./ But you stabbed me in the back while shaking my hand/ And therein lies the issue, friends don't try to trick you," Swift sings in "This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things." With partners like these, who needs enemies?

With Israel, our long-standing relationship blinded us to the extreme direction its government has taken in recent years and blocked us from decisive action to change its approach to Gaza. The United States still acts like this is the Israel it partnered with in the 1990s for a path to Middle East peace. Helping Israel today means recognizing our partner has changed. Instead of unconditional love, we need tough love to press Israel to change course.

We should know "All Too Well" that it's Benjamin Netanyahu's Israel now. While President Joe Biden gives him a bear hug, he "breaks (us) like a promise," rebuffing U.S. advice even as he asks for more military hardware—and gets it. But "Band-aids don't fix bullet holes." With Netanyahu, we've got "Bad Blood."

"Did you think we'd be fine?/ Still got scars on my back from your knife/ So don't think it's in the past./ These kind of wounds, they last and they last."

When it comes to adversaries, Swift leans into hard work and uses the rules to her advantage—another good lesson for a stronger foreign policy. Swift was crushed when her old record label was sold to mega-manager Scooter Braun (an ally of her old foe Ye), giving him the rights to her master recordings up to 2018. By then, Swift knew well enough to negotiate to own her music rights going forward. To recover control of her prior work, though, Swift rerecorded a decade's worth of her old songs, a massive lift that paid off, giving her copyright over all the new versions—which are obviously preferred by her hundreds of millions of fans.

I imagine this would be her approach to competition with China too. She knows it doesn't pay to be a bully (ask Ye). Instead of boogeyman-ing the adversary with unilateral tariffs and trade restrictions, a Swiftie approach would work with allies and within the international order to hold China to account for violating fair trade practices, stealing intellectual property and engaging in economic espionage.

This contrasts with some recent recommendations from the U.S. House Select Committee on the competition between the U.S. and China to be more aggressive with China in ways that could themselves risk violating international law. A better approach would be to invest more at home to make American businesses more competitive, while using international law to pressure China. Calling for the enforcement of international law is more credible when you're abiding by it too, anyway.

Swift would surely support how Biden values allies. One of Biden's biggest foreign policy successes has been rebuilding our partnership with NATO and using that to build a strong multilateral response to Russia's war in Ukraine.

Swift puts a premium on allies too. She has had many romantic partners over the years and even wrote songs about most of them. Despite breakups under public scrutiny, she has managed to keep most of her exes onside even after the romance ends. One even starred in one of her recent music videos. The same honesty and authenticity that rally her fans are the secret sauce to Swift's success with exes, too, and that broad support only makes her stronger.

It takes a skilled diplomat to know which disappointments are worth ending relationships and which merely merit changing them. That doesn't mean she trusts easily again, though. As Swift says in "End Game":"I bury hatchets, but I keep maps of where I put 'em."

If the United States wants to rebuild its superstar status, it needs to build a broader support base too. Our traditional allies are with us, but that isn't enough to tackle climate change, manage pandemics or expand peace in an increasingly fractured world.

America's coalition of support for Ukraine was significant but hasn't expanded since the early days of the war, with many important players—including China, India and South Africa—still refusing to condemn Russia's aggression. Fifteen African countries abstained from the United Nations vote demanding Russia leave Ukrainian territory.

Across the Global South, many American partners don't understand why they should support Washington's priority, when Washington offers little to address theirs. Conflict plagues many African states, from the Sahel to Sudan to the Democratic Republic of Congo, and debt is undermining development across much of the rest. These crises affect far more people than Gaza and Ukraine but receive a fraction of international attention. If America wants more reliable partners, it needs to be a better partner to others as well. This means engaging with them as partners rather than just pawns in a great power game.

"It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me," Swift declares in "Anti-Hero." "I'll stare directly at the sun but never in the mirror." The world today is facing unprecedented challenges. To help resolve them, the United States needs to face up to its own weaknesses first.

While we claim to be the indispensable nation representing democracy, human rights and accountability, that often isn't how we act. The America the world sees doesn't always look like the America we sing songs about.

"America the Flawed"? Such a song might not be a catchy anthem, but Swift has shown us that being real and honest has more pull than pretending to be perfect.

If we could tell our story of redemption, putting in the hard work at home and having flaws but overcoming them, perhaps we could build a worldwide fan base capable of addressing the global challenges we all face.

Red Caesarism: A Prevarication Prism

LITERARY NOOK
By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.

'The Destroyer of American Democracy'

(Trump said this of President Joe Biden on Dec. 1, 2023)

I lied for money and power and I got caught
I have 91 felony indictment counts
In courts some of my former staff told the truth
Now my potential time in jail mounts

State and federal prosecutors ask me why
I'm protected, I'm a candidate defendant
I keep projecting and continue to deny
Free speech is found in the First Amendment
In my latest campaign I've done nothing wrong
I just spout lies and insults stated previously
My MAGA mob sycophants always all go along
Biden "is the destroyer of American democracy"

But with 91 indictments I'll need another lawyer
It seems like I am the US democracy destroyer.

2024 Trials Wrap Up Rap for 45

NYC - Wash DC - Atl Ga - Florida

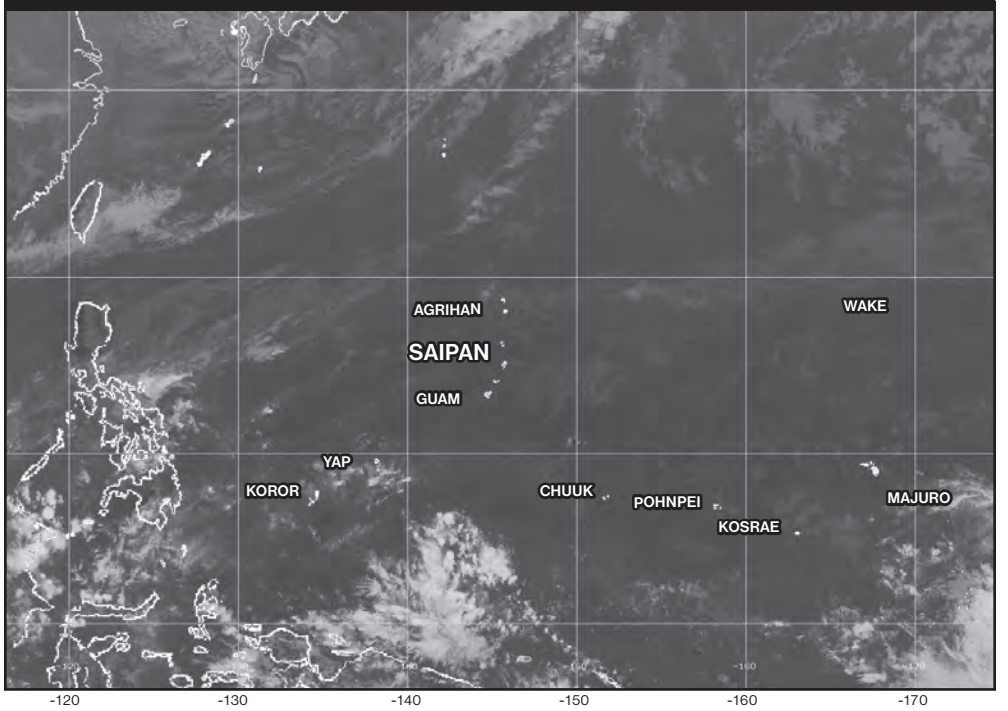
In 2024 all Trump trials will contain very few smiles
We heard this commentary and claptrap the year before
Facing 91 felony counts his lawyers in and out the door
Trials in four different states with four different judges
Appeals, delay after delay as precious court time mounts
45's lying reputation gets more bruises and smudges
In criminal and civil courts on the Atlantic east coast
From New York City to his Florida, Mara Lago home
About his many indictments there is very little to boast
In a confusing and conflicting downwards legal spiral
Mounting legal fees from his and Giulani's lawyers cost
Our faith in democracy is getting lost as insults go viral
And we'll hear his BS jive from 2024 through to 2025.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86 77°	87 77°	87 77°	87 77°	87 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:00 AM SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite imagery shows partly cloudy skies with light isolated showers. Combined seas are around 7 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	84° / 76°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	84° / 78°
Yap	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	86° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:45 AM	6:01 PM
Tuesday	6:45 AM	6:02 PM
Wednesday	6:45 AM	6:02 PM
Thursday	6:45 AM	6:03 PM
Friday	6:46 AM	6:03 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	3:15 AM	2:45 PM	-
Tuesday	4:15 AM	3:38 PM	-
Wednesday	5:18 AM	4:39 PM	-
Thursday	6:22 AM	5:44 PM	-
Friday	7:22 AM	6:51 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Windy	64° / 57°
Beijing	Mostly Cloudy	43° / 25°
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	73° / 64°
Honolulu	Windy	81° / 72°
London	Shower	48° / 39°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	76° / 49°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 75°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	73° / 61°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	73° / 64°
New York	Partly Cloudy	47° / 33°
Osaka	Shower	52° / 50°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	45° / 39°
Busan	Rainy	61° / 46°
Rome	Sunny	54° / 30°
Salem	Mostly Sunny	65° / 46°
San Francisco	Sunny	56° / 43°
Seoul	Rainy	43° / 37°
Tokyo	Showers	48° / 41°
Washington, DC	Sunny	52° / 31°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
6:38 AM	High Tide	1.44
11:01 AM	Low Tide	1.14
4:04 PM	High Tide	1.61
11:48 PM	Low Tide	-0.45

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Cuts and Nails Beauty Salon & Spa opens on Tinian

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Cuts and Nails Beauty Salon & Spa has opened in San Jose, Tinian to attend to the island's pampering needs.

Owner Edwin Sta. Theresa said he opened his latest business last Nov. 26 due to a recent population explosion on the island due to the military buildup.

The Tinian Health Center x-ray specialist and ultrasound technician said the construction of many military facilities on Tinian has resulted in the arrival of many construction workers. He added that the recent increase in the cost of airfare from Tinian to Saipan means fewer island residents can now afford to fly to the capital of the CNMI.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Cuts and Nails Beauty Salon & Spa is located in San Jose, Tinian and is open every day from 10am to 8pm.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Veteran beautician Ladiva David is currently a one-man army at Cuts and Nails Beauty Salon & Spa.

Services offered by the newly opened salon include haircut for both men ($15) and women ($18), rebond, semi-rebond, Brazilian blow-out, rebond with volume, highlights (two-tone and balayage), hair color, cellophane, keratin botox, and microblading.

In addition, veteran beautician Ladiva David also does hair and makeup, eyebrow tattoo, eyelashes, foot spa, manicure and pedicure, gel polish, and massage.

Sta. Theresa, who also owns Coffee & Bread, Edwin's Photo and Video Production, and Mr. Clean Janitorial Services on Tinian, said they are waiting to augment their staff with one more beautician and a masseuse from the Philippines.

"Please come and we take professional care of your hair," he said.

Cuts and Nails Beauty Salon & Spa is open every day from 10am to 8pm. For more information or to make appointments, call (670) 433-5866.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Haircut for women men is $18 at Cuts and Nails Beauty Salon & Spa.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Haircut for men is $15 at Cuts and Nails Beauty Salon & Spa.

NY seeks $370M in penalties in Trump's civil fraud trial

NEW YORK (AP)—New York state lawyers increased their request for penalties to over $370 million Friday in Donald Trump's civil business fraud trial. He retorted, "They should pay me."

The exchange came as lawyers for both sides filed papers highlighting their takeaways from the trial in court filings ahead of closing arguments, set for next Thursday. Trump is expected to attend, though plans could change.

It will be the final chance for state and defense lawyers to make their cases. The civil lawsuit, which accuses the leading Republican presidential hopeful of deceiving banks and insurers by vastly inflating his net worth, is consequential for him even while he fights four criminal cases in various courts.

The New York civil case could end up barring him from doing business in the state where he built his real estate empire. On top of that, state Attorney General Letitia James is seeking the $370 million penalty, plus interest—up from a pretrial figure of $250 million, nudged to over $300 million during the proceeding.

The state says the new sum reflects windfalls from wrongdoing, chiefly $199 million in profits from property sales and $169 million in savings on interest rates, as calculated by an investment banking expert hired by James' office.

Trump bristled at the proposed penalty, calling it "a disgrace" at a campaign stop in Sioux Center, Iowa.

"There was no victim. There was no default. There was no damages. No nothing," he said. In an all-caps post hours earlier on his Truth Social platform, he complained that the attorney general was seeking $370 million and instead "should pay me," asserting that businesses are fleeing New York.

(According to the state Labor Department, the number of private sector jobs in New York increased 1% in the year that ended this past November, compared to 1.6% nationally.)

James' office argued in a filing Friday that Trump, his company and executives clearly intended to defraud people.

"The myriad deceptive schemes they employed to inflate asset values and conceal facts were so outrageous that they belie innocent explanation," state lawyer Kevin Wallace wrote.

The state alleges Trump and his company ginned up exorbitant values for golf courses, hotels, and more, including Trump's former home in his namesake tower in New York and his current home at the Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida. The numbers were listed on personal financial statements that netted him attractive rates on loans and insurance, leaving him money to invest in other projects and even his 2016 presidential campaign, James' office says.

The defendants, including Trump's sons Donald Jr. and Eric, deny any wrongdoing. The former president has painted the case as a political maneuver by James, Judge Arthur Engoron and other Democrats, saying they're abusing the legal system to try to cut off his chances of winning back the White House this year.

Federal officials order grounding of some Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliners

Federal officials on Saturday ordered the immediate grounding of some Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliners until they are inspected after an Alaska Airlines plane suffered a blowout that left a gaping hole in the side of the fuselage.

The required inspections take around four to eight hours per aircraft and affect about 171 airplanes worldwide.

Alaska Airlines said in a statement that of the 65 737 Max 9 aircraft in its fleet, crews had inspected the paneled-over exits as part of recent maintenance work on 18 planes, and those were cleared to return to service Saturday. Inspections for the remaining aircraft were expected to be completed in the coming days, the company said.

An Alaska Airlines jetliner blew out a portion of its fuselage shortly after takeoff 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) above Oregon late Friday, forcing the pilots to make an emergency landing as its 171 passengers and six crew members donned oxygen masks.

No one was seriously hurt as the depressurized plane returned safely to Portland International Airport about 20 minutes after departure.

Authorities are still looking for the door from the paneled-over exit and have a good idea of where it landed, National Transportation Safety Board Chair Jennifer Homendy said at a news conference late Saturday.

"If you find that, please, please contact local law enforcement," she said.

It was extremely lucky that the airplane had not yet reached cruising altitude, when passengers and the flight crew take off their seatbelts and walk about the cabin, Homendy said.

"No one was seated in 26A and B where that door plug is, the aircraft was around 16,000 feet and only 10 minutes out from the airport when the door blew," she said. "Fortunately, they were not a cruise altitude of 30,000 or 35,000 feet."

Passenger Evan Smith said a boy and his mother were sitting in the row where the panel blew out, and the child's shirt was sucked off him and out of the plane.

"You heard a big loud bang to the left rear. A whooshing sound and all the oxygen masks deployed instantly and everyone got those on," Smith told KATU-TV.

The National Transportation Safety Board said Saturday it will investigate.

Alaska Airlines CEO Ben Minicucci said the inspection of the company's 737-9 aircraft could take days to complete. They make up a fifth of the company's 314 planes.

"We are working with Boeing and regulators to understand what occurred ... and will share updates as more information is available," Minicucci said. "My heart goes out to those who were on this flight–I am so sorry for what you experienced."

Alaska canceled more than 100 flights, or 15% of its Saturday schedule by midday, according to FlightAware. United said the plane inspections would result in about 60 cancellations.

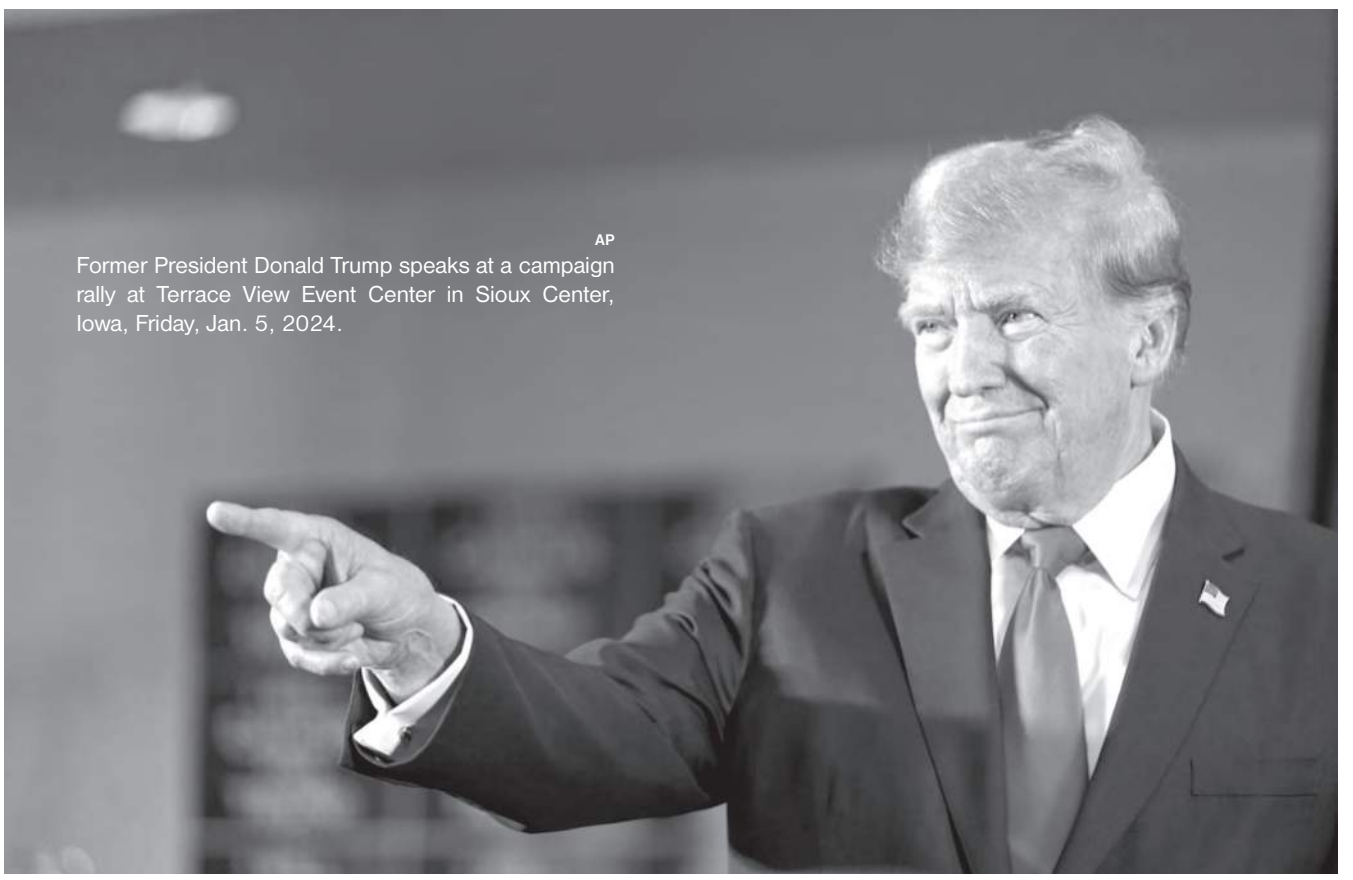
The Port of Portland, which operates the airport, told KPTV that the fire department treated minor injuries at the scene. One person was taken for more treatment but wasn't seriously hurt.

Flight 1282 took off from Portland at 5:07 p.m. Friday for a two-hour flight to Ontario, California. About six minutes later, the chunk of the fuselage blew out as the plane was at about 16,000 feet (4.8 kilometers). One of the pilots declared an emergency and asked for clearance to descend to 10,000 feet (3 kilometers), the altitude where the air would have enough oxygen to breathe safely.

'We need to turn back to Portland," the pilot told controllers in a calm voice that she maintained throughout the landing. ***(AP)***

Nation

Supreme Court will decide if Trump can be kept off '24 presidential ballots



AP

Former President Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally at Terrace View Event Center in Sioux Center, Iowa, Friday, Jan. 5, 2024.

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Supreme Court said Friday it will decide whether former President Donald Trump can be kept off the ballot because of his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss, inserting the court squarely in the 2024 presidential campaign.

The justices acknowledged the need to reach a decision quickly, as voters will soon begin casting presidential primary ballots across the country. The court agreed to take up Trump's appeal of a case from Colorado stemming from his role in the events that culminated in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Underscoring the urgency, arguments will be held on Feb. 8, during what is normally a nearly monthlong winter break for the justices. The compressed timeframe could allow the court to produce a decision before Super Tuesday on March 5, when the largest number of delegates are up for grabs in a single day, including in Colorado.

Trump, speaking at a campaign event in Iowa, said: "All I want is fair. I just hope that they're going to be fair."

The court will be considering for the first time the meaning and reach of a provision of the 14th Amendment barring some people who "engaged in insurrection" from holding public office. The amendment was adopted in 1868, following the Civil War. It has been so rarely used that the nation's highest court had no previous occasion to interpret it.

Colorado's Supreme Court, by a 4-3 vote, ruled last month that Trump should not be on the Republican primary ballot. The decision was the first time the 14th Amendment was used to bar a presidential contender from the ballot.

Trump is separately appealing to state court a ruling by Maine's Democratic secretary of state, Shenna Bellows, that he was ineligible to appear on that state's ballot over his role in the Capitol attack. Both the Colorado Supreme Court and the Maine secretary of state's rulings are on hold until the appeals play out.

The high court's decision to intervene, which both sides called for, is the most direct involvement in a presidential election since Bush v. Gore in 2000, when a conservative majority effectively decided the election for Republican George W. Bush. Only Justice Clarence Thomas remains from that court.

Three of the nine Supreme Court justices were appointed by Trump, though they have repeatedly ruled against him in 2020 election-related lawsuits, as well as his efforts to keep documents related to Jan. 6 and his tax returns from being turned over to congressional committees.

At the same time, Justices Amy Coney Barrett, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh have been in the majority of conservative-driven decisions that overturned the five-decade-old constitutional right to abortion, expanded gun rights and struck down affirmative action in college admissions.

Some Democratic lawmakers have called on Thomas to step aside from the case because of his wife's support for Trump's effort to overturn the results of the election, which he lost to Democrat Joe Biden. Thomas is unlikely to agree, and there was every indication Friday that all the justices are participating. Thomas has recused himself from only one other case related to the 2020 election, involving former law clerk John Eastman, and so far the people trying to disqualify Trump haven't asked him to recuse.

The 4-3 Colorado decision cites a ruling by Gorsuch when he was a federal judge in that state. That Gorsuch decision upheld Colorado's move to strike a naturalized citizen from the state's presidential ballot because he was born in Guyana and didn't meet the constitutional requirements to run for office. The court found that Trump likewise doesn't meet the qualifications due to his role in the U.S. Capitol attack on Jan. 6, 2021. That day, the Republican president had held a rally outside the White House and exhorted his supporters to "fight like hell" before they walked to the Capitol.

The two-sentence provision in Section 3 of the 14th Amendment states that anyone who swore an oath to uphold the constitution and then "engaged in insurrection" against it is no longer eligible for state or federal office. After Congress passed an amnesty for most of the former confederates the measure targeted in 1872, the provision fell into disuse until dozens of suits were filed to keep Trump off the ballot this year. Only the one in Colorado was successful.

Trump had asked the court to overturn the Colorado ruling without even hearing arguments. "The Colorado Supreme Court decision would unconstitutionally disenfranchise millions of voters in Colorado and likely be used as a template to disenfranchise tens of millions of voters nationwide," Trump's lawyers wrote.

They argue that Trump should win on many grounds, including that the events of Jan. 6 did not constitute an insurrection. Even if it did, they wrote, Trump himself had not engaged in insurrection. They also contend that the insurrection clause does not apply to the president and that Congress must act, not individual states.

Biden warns vs. Trump reelection after Jan. 6 Capitol riot, day 'we nearly lost America'

BLUE BELL, Pa. (AP)—President Joe Biden warned Friday that Donald Trump's efforts to retake the White House in 2024 pose a grave threat to the country, the day before the third anniversary of the violent riot at the U.S. Capitol by then-President Trump's supporters aiming to keep him in power.

Speaking near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, where George Washington and the Continental Army spent a bleak winter nearly 250 years ago, Biden said that Jan. 6 2021, marked a moment where "we nearly lost America—lost it all." He said the presidential race—a likely rematch with Trump, who is the far and away GOP frontrunner—is "all about" whether American democracy will survive.

The speech, the president's first political event of the election year, was intended to clarify the expected choice for voters this fall. Biden, who reentered political life because he felt he was best capable of defeating Trump in 2020, believes focusing on defending democracy to be central to persuading voters to reject Trump once again.

"We all know who Donald Trump is," Biden said. "The question we have to answer is who are we?"

Biden, laid out Trump's role in the Capitol attack, as a mob of the Republican's supporters overran the building while lawmakers were counting Electoral College votes that certified Democrat Biden's win. More than 100 police officers were bloodied, beaten and attacked by the rioters who overwhelmed authorities to break into the building.

"What's Trump done? He's called these insurrectionists 'patriots,'" Biden said, "and he promised to pardon them if he returns to office." He excoriated Trump for "glorifying" rather than condemning political violence.

At least nine people who were at the Capitol that day died during or after the rioting, including several officers who died of suicide, a woman who was shot and killed by police as she tried to break into the House chamber, and three other Trump supporters who authorities said suffered medical emergencies.

Biden said that by "trying to rewrite the facts of Jan. 6, Trump is trying to steal history the same way he tried to steal the election."

Trump, who faces 91 criminal charges stemming from his efforts to overturn his loss to Biden and three other felony cases, argues that Biden and top Democrats are themselves seeking to undermine democracy by using the legal system to thwart the campaign of his chief rival. The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to decide whether Trump could be kept off the ballot because of his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss.

Speaking in Iowa Friday, Trump repeated his false claims that he won the 2020 election and his assertion that the Capitol rioters were patriotic, and called the long prison sentences handed down for some offenders—whom Trump calls "hostages" and were convicted of crimes like assaulting police officers on Jan. 6 or seditious conspiracy—"one of the saddest things."

Defense secretary hospitalized since Jan. 1, but Pentagon kept news quiet

WASHINGTON (AP)—Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has been hospitalized since Monday due to complications following a minor elective medical procedure, his press secretary said, in the Defense Department's first acknowledgement that Austin had been admitted five days earlier to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said Friday that it was not clear when Austin would be released from the hospital, but said the secretary was "recovering well."

The Pentagon's failure to disclose Austin's hospitalization is counter to normal practice with the president and other senior U.S. officials and Cabinet members. The Pentagon Press Association, which represents media members who cover the Defense Department, sent a letter of protest to Ryder and Chris Meagher, the assistant defense secretary for public affairs.

"The fact that he has been at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center for four days and the Pentagon is only now alerting the public late on a Friday evening is an outrage," the PPA said in its letter. "At a time when there are growing threats to U.S. military service members in the Middle East and the U.S. is playing key national security roles in the wars in Israel and Ukraine, it is particularly critical for the American public to be informed about the health status and decision-making ability of its top defense leader."

The White House has refused to say when or how it had been notified of Austin's hospitalization, and it referred questions to the Pentagon.

When Attorney General Merrick Garland went in for a routine medical procedure in 2022, his office informed the public a week in advance and outlined how long he was expected to be out and when he would return to work.

Ryder, the Pentagon spokesman, cited an "evolving situation," and said that due to privacy and medical issues, the Pentagon did not make Austin's absence public. He declined to provide any other details about Austin's medical procedure or health.

Asia

ASIAN BRIEFS

Snow hinders rescues and aid deliveries to isolated communities after Japan quakes kill 126 people

WAJIMA, Japan (AP)—Rescue teams worked through snow to deliver supplies to isolated hamlets Sunday, six days after a powerful earthquake hit western Japan, killing at least 126 people. Heavy snowfall expected in Ishikawa Prefecture later Sunday and through the night added to the urgency. After Monday's 7.6-magnitude temblor, 222 people were still unaccounted for, and 560 people were injured. Hundreds of aftershocks have followed, rattling Noto Peninsula, where the quakes are centered. Taiyo Matsushita walked three hours through mud to reach a supermarket in Wajima city to buy food and other supplies for his family. The home where he lives with his wife and four children, and about 20 nearby homes, are among the more than a dozen communities cut off by landslides. Power was out, and in a matter of hours, they couldn't even use their cell phones, he told Jiji Press. "We want everyone to know help isn't coming to some places," Matsushita was quoted as saying by Jiji Press. "We feel such an attachment to this community. But when I think about my children, it's hard to imagine we can keep living here." Late Saturday, a woman in her 90s was rescued from a crumbled home in Suzu, Ishikawa Prefecture, after 124 hours trapped in the rubble. She was welcomed by shouts of encouragement, although the darkness and a long blue sheet of plastic blocked her from view. Chances for survival greatly diminish after the first 72 hours. Ishikawa officials say 1,370 homes were completely or partially destroyed. Many of the houses in that western coastal region of the main island are aging and wooden. Cars lay tossed on cracked, bumpy roads. Snow blanketed the debris and highways. Wires dangled from lopsided poles. The more than 30,000 people who evacuated to schools, auditoriums and community facilities slept on cold floors. They trembled in fear through the aftershocks. They prayed their missing loved ones were safe. Others cried softly for those who had died.

S. Korea says North has again fired artillery shells near their sea border

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea conducted a new round of artillery drills near the disputed sea boundary with South Korea on Saturday, officials in Seoul said, a day after the North's similar exercises prompted South Korea to respond with its own firing drills in the same area. The North's back-to-back firing exercises come after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un repeatedly called for stronger war readiness to cope with what he called deepening confrontation led by the U.S. Experts say North Korea is likely to continue its provocative run of weapons tests to boost its leverage in potential future negotiations with Washington as the U.S. heads into November elections. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that the North fired more than 60 rounds into the waters north of the western sea boundary on Saturday afternoon. The joint chiefs said South Korea strongly urges North Korea to halt acts that heighten tensions. It said it will take corresponding military steps if North Korea continues artillery drills that pose a threat to South Korean nationals. The statement didn't say whether South Korea would respond with its own drills. South Korean media reported the South didn't stage firing exercises, after determining the direction of North Korean shells fired Saturday was less provocative than Friday.

Myanmar confirms key northeastern city on border with China seized by ethnic alliance

BANGKOK (AP)—Myanmar's military government has acknowledged that it withdrew its forces from a key city on the northeastern border with China after it was taken over by an alliance of ethnic armed groups it has been battling for months. The fall of Laukkaing late Thursday is the biggest in a series of defeats suffered by Myanmar's military government since the ethnic alliance launched an offensive Oct. 27. It underlines the pressure the government is under as it battles pro-democracy guerrillas in the wake of a 2021 military takeover as well as ethnic minority armed groups across the country. Ethnic armed organizations have battled for greater autonomy for decades, but Myanmar has been wracked by what amounts to civil war since the army seized power in February 2021 from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, sparking nationwide armed resistance by pro-democracy forces. The Three Brotherhood Alliance that took Laukkaing is composed of the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Arakan Army. The MNDAA is a military force of the Kokang minority, who are ethnic Chinese. Photos and videos on social media showed a vast amount of weapons that the alliance claimed to have captured.

Fear of violence looms over contentious Bangladesh election as polls open

DHAKA (AP)—Voters in Bangladesh began casting their ballots Sunday as polls opened in an election fraught with violence and a boycott from the main opposition party, paving the way for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League to seize a fourth consecutive term. Authorities said at least 18 arson attacks were reported across the country since late Friday, with 10 of them targeting polling places. Four people died Friday in an arson attack on a passenger train heading toward the capital, Dhaka. The incidents have intensified tensions ahead of the parliamentary elections that the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its allied groups said they would shun. Campaigning in the South Asian nation of 169 million has been marred with violence as at least 15 people have been killed in recent months. Hostilities reached a boiling point in late October, after a massive rally in Dhaka by the BNP saw clashes with police. As the election neared, authorities blamed much of the violence on the BNP, who they accuse of seeking to sabotage the election. On Saturday, detectives arrested seven men belonging to the BNP and its youth wing for their alleged involvement in the passenger train attack. The opposition party denied any role in the incident, and say they are being blamed by authorities who want to discredit their "peaceful and nonviolent movement." On Sunday morning, Hasina and her daughter voted amid tight security at Dhaka City College, as other citizens lined up outside to cast their ballot. Voting will last 8 hours across the country for some 119 million eligible citizens to vote in over 42,000 stations.

World

Hezbollah, Israel trade heavy cross-border fire

AP

People watch smoke rising to the sky after an explosion in the Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel, Saturday, Jan. 6, 2024.

BEIRUT (AP)—Israel and Lebanon-based Hezbollah traded fire Saturday in one of the heaviest days of cross-border fighting in recent weeks, a day after the militia's leader urged retaliation for the targeted killing, presumably by Israel, of a top Hamas leader in Lebanon's capital.

» As Blinken seeks to prevent regional escalation

Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said that if his group didn't strike back for the killing Tuesday of Saleh Arouri, Hamas' deputy political leader, all of Lebanon would be vulnerable to Israeli attacks.

With the risk of regional escalation, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken kicked off an urgent Middle East diplomatic tour, his fourth since the Israel-Hamas war erupted three months ago.

"It is absolutely necessary to avoid Lebanon being dragged into a regional conflict," the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said in Beirut during his own Middle East tour.

Hezbollah said it launched 62 rockets toward an Israeli air surveillance base on Mount Meron and scored direct hits in its "initial response" to Arouri's killing. It said rockets also struck two army posts near the border. The Israeli military said about 40 rockets were fired toward Meron and that a base was targeted. The army's chief spokesperson, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said the rockets caused no casualties in Israel.

Hagari said the military struck the Hezbollah squads that fired the rockets and also attacked Hezbollah military sites. Hezbollah said six of its fighters were killed Saturday, raising the toll since the fighting began to 150.

Israeli airstrikes on southern Lebanon hit the outskirts of Kouthariyeh al-Siyad, a village about 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the border, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said, adding that there were casualties. Such strikes deeper inside Lebanon have been rare since the border fighting started nearly three months ago. NNA also said Israeli forces shelled border areas including the town of Khiam.

Separately, the armed wing of the Islamic Group in Lebanon, the country's branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and a close ally of Hamas, said it fired two volleys of rockets toward the Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona on Friday night. Two of the group's members were killed in the strike that killed Arouri.

Russian shelling kills 11 in Donetsk region while Ukraine claims it hit Crimean air base

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Eleven people were killed Saturday in Russian shelling in Ukraine's partially occupied Donetsk province, according to regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin. Five children were among the dead and eight further people were wounded in the attack on the Pokrovsk district, he said.

Ukraine's military claimed Saturday it successfully attacked the Saki military airbase in the west of the Russian-occupied Crimean peninsula.

"Saki airfield! All targets were hit!" Air Force commander Mykola Oleshchuk wrote on Telegram. He also published a photo appearing to show the airfield, though it was not immediately possible to verify the image.

Russian officials did not comment on the alleged attack, but Russia's Defense Ministry said in the early hours of Saturday that it had successfully downed four Ukrainian missiles over the peninsula overnight. Later on Saturday, the ministry reported that its air defense forces had shot down six anti-ship missiles over the Black Sea.

Traffic was temporarily suspended for a third straight day on a bridge connecting the peninsula, which Moscow seized illegally in 2014, with Russia's southern Krasnodar region. The span is a crucial supply link for Russia's war effort.

In Russia, local officials in Belgorod—some 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the border with Ukraine—said that an "air target" was shot down on approach to the city. Ukrainian attacks on Dec. 30 in Belgorod killed 25 people, officials there said, with rocket and drone attacks continuing throughout this week.

As Russians prepared to celebrate Orthodox Christmas, Christmas Eve masses in Belgorod were canceled due to the "operational situation," mayor Valentin Demidov said.

Health & Wellness

Immunization: Taking action for a healthier future

YOUR HEALTH

By TERI M. FLORES
Correspondent

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Routine vaccinations during childhood and adolescence have proven to be the most effective tool for preventing and controlling the spread of infectious diseases.

Editor's Note
This article was originally intended for publication as part of a health supplement in celebration of National Immunization Awareness Month in August.

From March 2020 until May 2023 when it was declared over, the COVID-19 pandemic had chokehold on all aspects of human existence, even threatening the very loss of humanity itself. Eventually, after three years of living in fear and uncertainty, the devastating threat of a global pandemic ended with the implementation of a successful mass immunization program.

The COVID-19 pandemic is the newest health crisis the world has faced in recent history. Prior to this, three of the most notable ones were the Black Death during the 13th century, the Spanish Flu in 1918 and the HIV/AIDs during the early '80s.

Health officials believe that any global public health challenge such as the outbreak of any infectious disease can be overcome by ensuring that every man, woman, child, and communities are protected through easy access to vaccines.

For the past 10 years and as part of global efforts to educate families and raise awareness about the importance of vaccines and immunizations, the National Public Health Information Coalition, in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has designated August as National Immunization Awareness Month.

Public health experts see NIAM as a time for individuals, healthcare professionals, and communities to come together to champion the importance of vaccines in protecting public health and in saving lives. By using different platforms such as community events, lectures, and the distribution of hand-outs and educational materials, health care professionals aim to raise awareness about vaccines and why people of all ages should be on top of their vaccination schedule.

Information and resources about vaccines and immunization programs are easily available online or from the CHCC Immunization Program, outpatient clinics, or local healthcare providers on island.

The CDC also has online materials and comprehensive resources available for those who want to learn about vaccines and. Visit their site at www.cdc.gov.

For a global perspective on immunization, the World Health Organization offers resources and information about global vaccination efforts. Visit their site at https://www.who.int/health-topics/vaccines-and-immunization

Another website that provides information on vaccines, including a vaccine finder tool to help individuals locate vaccination clinics near them is www.vaccines.gov.

There are also advocacy organizations such as the Immunization Action Coalition and Vaccinate Your Family which offer advocacy resources and tools for individuals interested in supporting vaccination efforts.

■■■

Routine vaccinations during childhood and adolescence have proven to be the most effective tool for preventing and controlling the spread of infectious diseases. WHO considers immunization a global health and development success story, saving millions of lives, yearly.

WHO describes a vaccine as a means "to prepare the body's immune response against diseases." Vaccines are either administered orally or through a needle injection. The first successful vaccine was created on 1796 by Dr. Edward Jenner for smallpox.

Being vaccinated not only benefits individuals by protecting them from severe pain and at times death from preventable communicable diseases but, more importantly, it protects future generations. By reducing, if not totally getting rid of diseases such as measles and polio, newborns are spared the risk of being exposed to deadly diseases.

While history has already proven the effectiveness of vaccines in keeping communities safe, there are still those who delay or are hesitant to get vaccinated despite the availability and access to vaccination services. There are still misconceptions about vaccines and its effect and effectiveness.

Among the six common misconceptions about vaccination listed down by the WHO is that "a child's immune system can be overloaded if the child receives multiple vaccinations all at the same time." This concern came about when the childhood vaccination schedule was expanded with the introduction of new vaccines. Numerous studies, however, show that the current recommended vaccines for infants are no more likely to cause harmful effects when given as a combination than when they are given separately.

There is also a misconception that children do not need to be vaccinated anymore from infectious diseases that have already disappeared such as polio and measles. While polio may have been wiped out in the United States since 1979, this disease is still widespread in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Only through vaccination can the spread of this deadly childhood disease be prevented.

Then there are also those who believe that natural immunity is better than a vaccine-acquired immunity while others believe that vaccines cause harmful side effects and even death.

The truth is vaccines are very safe and if there are any negative side effects, they are minor and temporary such as a sore on the arm or a slight fever that can often be controlled by taking paracetamol after vaccination.

Each of us can make a difference in protecting our community from the spread of certain communicable diseases that can threaten the very existence of humanity. We can do our part not just by ensuring we and our own families are on top of our immunization schedules. Most importantly, each of us can help by raising awareness and, by promoting equitable access to vaccines, we can protect public health and save lives. Get involved and be part of the effort to ensure a healthier future for all.

Healthy Living

Crazy oats *Called "folles avoines," or crazy oats, by French explorers in North America, wild rice is not a rice at all, by a delicious, nutritious, edible*

About wild rice

- Given its name by English explorers who saw Native Americans gathering it from areas around the Great Lakes that reminded them of paddies
- High in complex carbohydrates and fiber, low in fat and sodium and a good source of B vitamins and iron
- Can stand on its own or a side dish or be used as a base for a salad or an entree
- Pairs well with mushrooms, fresh herbs, raw veggies, cooked squashes

Source: California Wild Rice Advisory Board

MAYO CLINIC MINUTE

Reset your eating habits after the holiday

By DEB BALZER
Mayo Clinic News Network

It's officially 2024. A new year offers new beginnings and an opportunity to reset your eating habits after the holidays.

Andrea Delgado, a Mayo Clinic dietitian, says it's best to eliminate what you don't need, including those party food leftovers.

Is your refrigerator holding onto holiday leftovers? It's OK to let them go.

"What we want to do is, if we have any remaining food items or beverages that lingered after the holidays, we want to get rid of them," she says.

Either throw leftovers away or slowly eat them in smaller portions.

"We also want to slowly regress back to our old habits. Start introducing vegetables and fruits with most meals," says Delgado.

And pay attention to your food portion sizes.

"We don't necessarily have to go on a diet. We don't necessarily have to eliminate all of our foods. We just want to look at the portion sizes and the frequency that we have these foods," she says.

Opt for lean protein, whole grains and fresh produce in your diet, still allowing for an occasional treat.

"With nutrition, there is no all or nothing. We can still enjoy those nice treats, those good desserts, those savory beverages. It's all in how much and how often we are having them," says Delgado.

DREAMSTIME/TNS

After the holidays, eliminate food you don't need, including those party food leftovers, and add healthy vegetables and fruits to your diet.

Reset your eating habits with portion control

Simplify your portion control by dividing your plate into three sections. This can assist you in making healthier food choices and managing your portions more effectively.

- One-half: fruit and non-starchy vegetables
- One-quarter: whole grains
- One-quarter: protein-rich foods, such as legumes, fish or lean meats

Life & Style

Jo Koy ready to fulfill childhood dream of hosting Golden Globes

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Jo Koy remembers watching major award ceremonies like the Golden Globes with his mother on their living room sofa trying to guess the winners.

Koy

It was a ritual that Koy cherished as a child. Since then, he's grown as a comedian with various stand-up specials and several acting credits including last year's film "Easter Sunday."

On Sunday, Koy will live out his childhood dream of hosting the Globes—which is looking to return to form after being tarnished following years of scandal. He calls his upcoming duties a "very big moment."

"This is a throwback to my childhood, and now I'm the guy who's onstage," said Koy, the second Asian host in Globes history. (Sandra Oh emceed the show in 2019.) He wants to the inspire those from the Asian community in his first major hosting gig.

"As a kid and watching TV and not having that many role models to kind of indirectly inspire me, that's what this means to me," said the Filipino American actor, whose "Easter Sunday" film became the first big studio movie with an all-Filipino ensemble. He's released five stand-up specials on Comedy Central and Netflix, including his most recent Netflix special, "Live From The Los Angeles Forum."

"I know there's kids out there that will be watching the Globes," he said. "And now when they see this, it's like 'Oh, it's possible. I can do this.' Things aren't so gray anymore. It's not just two colors on the palette. Sometime three. Every color is on the palette. This is a beautiful moment. I really want to make sure I knock this out of the park."

Koy hopes to leave a positive mark on the Globes, which are the first major broadcast of awards season. It airs live beginning at 5 p.m. Pacific on CBS and Paramount+ for users with a Showtime subscription.

The show is known for being a boozy celebration of television and film with a more party-like atmosphere compared to their Academy Award counterparts.

But the Globes faced tremendous backlash after a 2021 report in the Los Angeles Times found there were zero Black members in the group that only had 87 foreign journalists. The membership has since been revamped with a voting body of 300.

All indications point to a starry show, which will include presenters such as Michelle Yeoh, Will Ferrell, Angela Bassett, America Ferrera and Amanda Seyfried.

Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" leads the Globes nominations with nine including for best picture musical or comedy as well as acting nominations for Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling and three of its original songs. It is closely followed by its release date and meme companion "Oppenheimer," which scored eight nominations, including for best picture drama, best director for Christopher Nolan and nods for actors Cillian Murphy, Robert Downey Jr. and Emily Blunt.

Cher is denied an immediate conservatorship over son's money

LAS VEGAS (AP)—A bail hearing was postponed Tuesday in Las Vegas for a former Los Angeles-area gang leader charged with orchestrating the killing of hip-hop music legend Tupac Shakur in 1996, giving defense attorneys time to respond to prosecutors' allegations that witnesses in the case may be at risk.

Cher

Duane "Keffe D" Davis' court-appointed attorneys sought the delay to respond to prosecutors' allegations, filed last week, that jail telephone recordings and a list of names provided to Davis' family members show that Davis poses a threat to the public if he is released.

No court hearing was held Tuesday. One of Davis' attorneys, Robert Arroyo, told The Associated Press later that the defense wanted to respond in court in writing. He declined to provide details. Arroyo said last week he did not see evidence that any witness had been named or threatened.

Davis is the only person ever charged with a crime in the drive-by shooting that also wounded rap music mogul Marion "Suge" Knight, who is now serving 28 years in a California prison for an unrelated fatal shooting in the Los Angeles area in 2015.

Davis has pleaded not guilty and is due for trial in June on a murder charge. He has remained jailed without bail since his arrest Sept. 29 outside his Henderson home. Las Vegas police had served a search warrant there in mid-July.

Davis, originally from Compton, California, is now housed at the Clark County Detention Center in Las Vegas, where detainees' phone calls are routinely recorded. If convicted at trial, he could spend the rest of his life in prison.

In a recording of an October jail call, prosecutors say Davis' son told the defendant about a "green light" authorization. Their court filing made no reference to Davis instructing anyone to harm someone, or to anyone associated with the case being physically harmed.

"In (Davis') world, a 'green light' is an authorization to kill," prosecutors Marc DiGiacomo and Binu Palal told Clark County District Court Judge Carli Kierny in the court document, adding that at least one witness was provided assistance from federal authorities "so he could change his residence."

Britney Spears shoots down album rumors, vowing to 'never return to music industry'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Britney Spears is shooting down rumors of a new album, vowing to "never return to the music industry."

Spears

At the same time, Spears noted in Wednesday's Instagram post, she's still writing music — just for other people.

"When I write, I write for fun or I write for other people !!!" she wrote. "I've written over 20 songs for other people the past two years !!! I'm a ghostwriter and I honestly enjoy it that way !!!"

The Instagram caption, in which she blasted those who "keep saying I'm turning to random people to do a new album," was paired with a photo of a Guido Reni painting of Salome holding the head of John the Baptist.

This isn't the first time Spears has indicated she's retiring from releasing her own music. In July 2021, while still under the infamous conservatorship that controlled her life, money and voice for nearly 14 years, her longtime manager Larry Rudolph resigned, saying she had no intention of resuming her career. Just after being released from the conservatorship later that year, she took to Instagram to say she was scared of the music business and that not doing her own music was an act of defiance against her family.

But the next year, she released the single "Hold Me Closer," a collaboration with Elton John that spent 20 weeks on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, peaking at No. 6. Last year's "Mind Your Business," a single with will.i.am, was poorly reviewed and failed to make the Hot 100, though. Spears' last full album was 2016's "Glory."

Shia LaBeouf converts to Catholicism after being confirmed

Actor Shia LaBeouf, known for his off-screen troubles as well as his film roles, has converted to Catholicism after being confirmed on New Year's Eve at a Mass presided over by Capuchin Franciscan friars.

LaBeouf

The Capuchin Franciscans-Western American Province announced the news on its Facebook site where it posted images of a smiling LeBeouf receiving Communion, kneeling with his eyes shut in prayer at Mass and hugging friars who attended the ceremony.

The sacramental ceremony was held at Old Mission Santa Inés Parish in Solvang, California, the same friary where LaBeouf—who has acknowledged alcoholism and faced abuse allegations—trained for months for his role as one of Italy's best-known and most revered saints in the 2022 film, " Padre Pio."

"The Capuchin Franciscan friars are overjoyed to welcome him into the fold and witness his deep commitment to his faith journey," the Catholic religious order said.

LaBeouf "has embarked on a profound spiritual journey that has led him to embrace the teachings of the Catholic Church," the order said. "His decision to fully enter the Church is a testament to his sincere desire to grow in his relationship with God and live out the Gospel values." ***(AP)***

Parade of old boyfriends makes current beau uneasy

DEAR ABBY: My girlfriend is the loveliest, smartest, most compassionate and supportive person I know. We have been together for a year and a half. When we first met, we hung out a few times. When I told her my feelings toward her, she responded that she was in an open relationship, so I backed away.

Months later, we met up again. I helped her with a carpentry project, and she said she was done with the open relationship stuff and wanted a monogamous relationship. I agreed. We have a caring, supportive relationship that means the world to me.

Multiple ex-boyfriends call her and want to hang out, and she wants that, too. What bothers me is worrying the exes' intentions may not be good, yet she feeds into it and tells me I need to trust her. I struggle with jealousy, anger and distrust when this happens, and I have shared those feelings with her, but she can't let these folks move on. She says I'm stealing her freedom and controlling her by asking her to ignore them. This is the biggest problem in our relationship, but everything else is great. Are my emotions wrong?

INSECURE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

DEAR INSECURE: Your emotions are not "wrong." Your emotions are your emotions. Sometimes there is sacrifice involved when we form new relationships. Your girlfriend may have many fine qualities, but if she can't understand that you feel these former lovers are a threat to your relationship, rather than attempt to "control her," realize she isn't the girl for you. Sorry!

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I have developed several serious health conditions that won't get better. I am at high risk for respiratory illnesses. Even a common cold can have a serious impact on my life. My family just doesn't get it. My husband does not understand my situation and my needs. His social life puts me at risk, yet he continues to attend large gatherings and events such as concerts. I have had COVID twice, and avoiding hospitalization is crucial. I'm currently on oxygen and will be until I die.

There are places I would like to visit, and things I would like to do while I still can. But my husband balks, especially if his plans need to be changed. I can't do these things or travel without assistance. I NEED him now. With every "not now" and "we will see," I grow increasingly frustrated and depressed. What can I do?

BUCKET LIST IN KANSAS

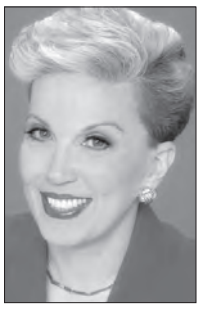
DEAR BUCKET LIST: Recognize the person you married is selfish and self-centered. "Not now" and "we will see" mean NO. (What a guy!) His refusal should not mean you mustn't enjoy the activities you dream about. You may, however, have to become creative and arrange for someone other than your husband to accompany you. He may not like it, but please consider it.

■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

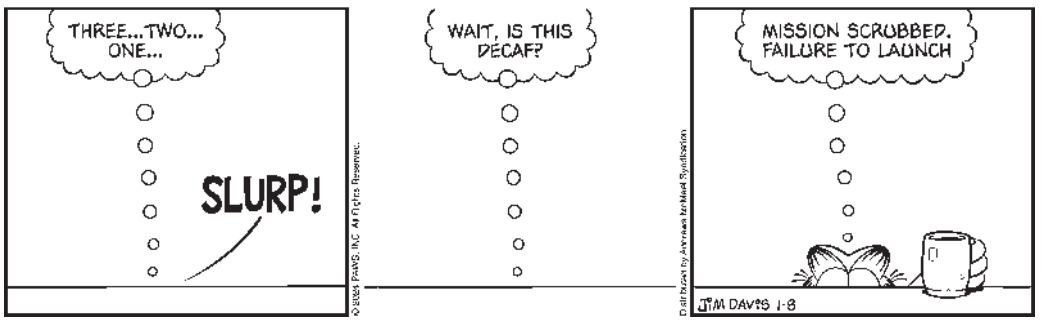
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

HERE'S THE LATEST POLL ON YOUR PERFORMANCE AS DAD. YOUR APPROVAL RATING IS PRETTY LOW, I'M AFRAID.
THAT'S BECAUSE THERE'S NOT NECESSARILY ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN WHAT'S GOOD AND WHAT'S POPULAR. I DO WHAT'S RIGHT, NOT WHAT GETS APPROVAL.
YOU'LL NEVER KEEP THE JOB WITH THAT ATTITUDE.
IF SOMEONE ELSE OFFERS TO DO IT, LET ME KNOW.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

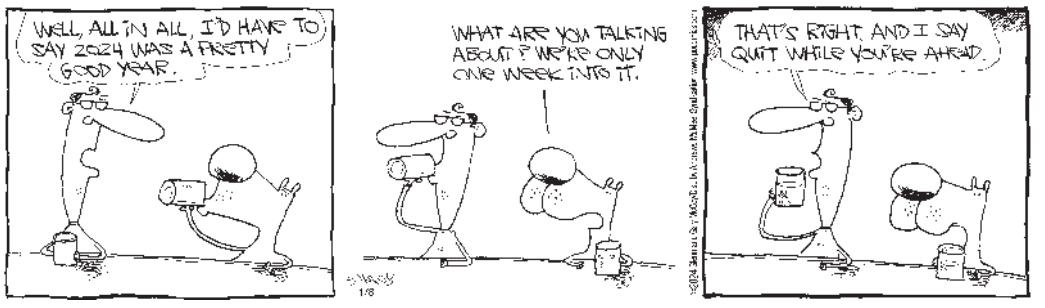


Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


WELL, ALL IN ALL, I'D HAVE TO SAY 2024 WAS A PRETTY GOOD YEAR.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WE'RE ONLY ONE WEEK INTO IT.
THAT'S RIGHT, AND I SAY QUIT WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Aachen article
4 Some babies
9 Service charge
12 Singer Rawls
13 Boredom
14 Vintage
15 Hepburn/Astaire musical comedy
17 "Way cool!"
18 Employ
19 With gusto
21 Not as loud
24 Narcissist's obsession
25 Commotion
26 ER workers
28 Narrow cuts
31 Antique cars
33 Rowing need
35 Withered
36 Take — at (try)
38 "You betcha!!"
40 Director Ang
41 Skedaddled
43 Asked for ID
45 Small beard
47 Chemical suffix
48 Sch. URL ender
49 Beach sandals
54 Goose egg
55 Say out loud
56 "— you kidding?"
57 Sinusitis doc
58 Sucker
59 Hardly any

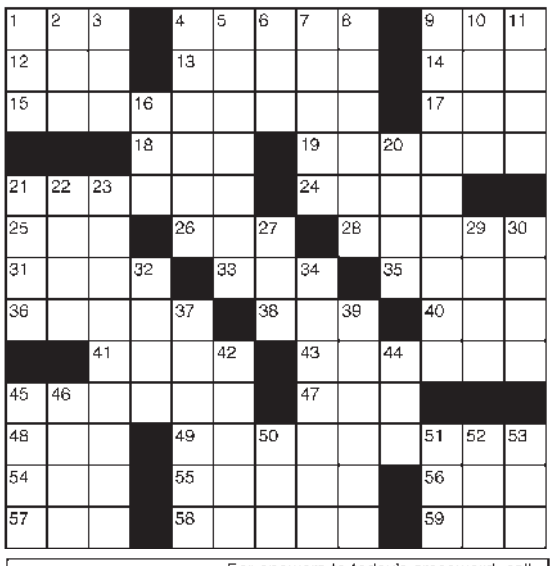
DOWN

1 Santa's aide
2 Debtor's letters
3 Sister
4 Yellowstone attraction
5 Dante topic
6 Genetic letters
7 "Star Wars" creator
8 Strainers
9 Home stadium of the Detroit Lions
10 Israeli carrier
11 Vortex
16 Almond, e.g.
20 Misfortunes
21 Country singer Evans
22 Rhyming tributes
23 Tennis infraction
27 Verbalize
29 Sloth's home
30 Burpee buy
32 Popcorn seasoning
34 Cookbook entries
37 Strengthen
39 Saute
42 Triangular letter
44 Seminary subj.
45 Hackman of "The Firm"
46 Valhalla VIP
50 Addams cousin
51 Klutz
52 Season opener?
53 Stitch

Solution time: 21 mins.

B	U	B		N	H	L		I	B	I	Z	A
A	N	A		O	L	E		F	A	R	E	D
I	C	Y		O	U	I	O	H	H	A	N	D
T	A	O		K	I	T	T	Y				
S	P	U	N		D	S	T		G	U	M	S
			I	M	S		O	P	E	R	A	S
E	L	E	N	A				A	R	L	E	S
I	O	G	J	A	M		M	M	M			
S	A	G	A		A	G	O		S	C	A	M
				A	I	A	N	A		A	I	F
O	U	I	O	H	I	U	R	N		N	I	A
A	S	I	D	E		L	O	T		T	E	N
H	E	N	E	W		S	E	E		O	N	S

Last Friday's Answer



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Cynthia Erivo, 37; Gaby Hoffmann, 42; Sarah Polley, 45; Shirley Bassey, 87.

Happy Birthday: Keep your eye on the ball. Stay focused on what's important to you, and rely on the experience and knowledge you honed to reach your personal, financial and physical goals. Take the initiative to be innovative. Set high standards, and don't let outside influences lead you down the wrong path. Only you know what you need to make your life easier. Choose what makes you happy and don't look back. Your numbers are 8, 11, 19, 23, 31, 35, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Avoid taking a physical, emotional or financial risk. Listen, then validate whatever information you receive. Aim to add stability to your life and avoid stress due to uncertainty and misinformation. Positive change is possible if you create opportunities and follow through. ✪✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Keep your money, possessions and ideas safe. Someone will be eager to take your money or mislead you. Look for opportunities; a positive turnabout will develop. It's up to you to take the first step and make things happen. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Be careful; someone will be eager to lead you astray or take advantage of you. Keep personal information to yourself, and be observant when dealing with partners or those who make impossible offers. If someone asks for money or tries to overcharge, walk away. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Don't offer too much information or embellish situations. You should stick to the truth and use your insight and intuition to make your dream a reality. Call on those you know you can count on. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Participate in events that support a platform that displays your offer. Use physical, emotional and intellectual tactics to give an all-around vision of the possibilities. Don't fall short because you let someone interfere with your plans. Take charge and make things happen. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Put things on hold you can't change and get back to improving what's feasible. Pick up a skill. Research, and get involved in events and pastimes that will broaden your awareness and help you see what's possible. Make changes to expand your comfort at home. ✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Keep an eye on expenditures. Money will filter through your fingers if you aren't paying attention. Don't let anger ruin your day or your relationship with someone close. Put more time and effort into personal improvements instead of trying to change others. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: It's time to shake things up and change your life. Consider what stabilizes you, offer positive reinforcements and start to build the infrastructure to house the transformation you want to make. Don't rely on others; make opportunities happen. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Be happy and live your life your way. Refuse to let anyone limit or control you. Do your research and choose what's best for you. A career change looks inviting. Before you agree, hash out the details and get what you want in writing. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Find alternatives that offer household efficiency. Lowering your overhead will help you regain the control you require to balance your life personally and professionally. The more hands-on you are, the more you will save. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Take a moment to reflect and reconnect with kindred spirits. An attitude adjustment will offer a realistic alternative to your lifestyle. Refuse to let the changes others choose tempt you to follow suit. Your best move is toward personal happiness. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Check out roadblocks before you begin your journey. Educate yourself and physically prepare for your next venture. The time and effort you put in will ward off unnecessary setbacks. Surround yourself with trustworthy individuals. ✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are driven, optimistic and flexible. You are playful and charismatic.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		2	5	8				
1	7				9	5		8
3	5			6				4
	8	3					4	6
	1	7	6	2	4		8	5
6				7		1		
	3	1	2				6	
	2			3		8		1
		4		1	8			7

Difficulty: ★ 1/8

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

1	8	9	3	4	7	6	2	5
3	6	2	5	1	9	7	4	8
7	5	4	2	6	8	9	1	3
8	3	7	1	2	5	4	9	6
5	4	1	7	9	6	3	8	2
9	2	6	8	3	4	5	7	1
4	1	5	6	7	2	8	3	9
2	7	8	9	5	3	1	6	4
6	9	3	4	8	1	2	5	7

Difficulty: ★★★★ 1/2

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

CANNED FOODS — Solution: 4 letters

P	U	H	C	T	E	K	I	T	C	H	E	N	W
L	C	H	E	R	R	I	E	S	E	T	A	D	A	R
U	A	A	N	C	H	O	V	I	E	S	H	T	C	E
M	R	S	P	O	T	S	P	S	T	E	E	B	H	C
K	R	S	L	E	Y	U	A	P	B	R	R	A	O	I
L	O	U	S	A	R	S	A	U	E	U	R	R	C	P
I	T	G	L	E	S	S	T	D	C	N	I	L	H	E
M	S	A	E	B	T	T	W	E	S	E	N	E	E	L
T	E	R	S	A	E	O	L	N	R	A	G	Y	E	P
U	M	A	S	R	H	O	R	Ⓣ	Ⓘ	Ⓝ	L	A	S	P
N	U	P	U	C	B	O	E	L	A	K	K	M	E	A
O	G	S	M	S	C	S	H	R	I	M	P	I	O	E
C	E	A	T	S	M	O	O	R	H	S	U	M	W	N
O	L	E	N	T	I	L	S	E	L	P	P	A	U	I
C	R	A	N	B	E	R	R	I	E	S	R	A	E	P

©2021 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 1/8

Anchovies, Apples, Asparagus, Barley, Beets, Butter, Capers, Carrots, Cherries, Clam Chowder, Coconut Milk, Corn, Crab, Cranberries, Dates, Herring, Kale, Ketchup, Kitchen, Kiwi, Legumes, Lentils, Lobster, Mushrooms, Mussels, Nacho Cheese, Oyster, Pasta, Pears, Pineapple, Plum, Pumpkin, Purée, Recipe, Salmon, Salsa, Sauce, Shrimp, Tin, Water

Last Friday's Answer: Voiceover

To purchase WONDERWORD books, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Texans wrap up playoff spot with 23-19 victory over Colts

AP

Houston Texans running back Devin Singletary (26) scores a rushing touchdown during the second half of an NFL football game against the Indianapolis Colts, Saturday, Jan. 6, 2024, in Indianapolis.

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Rookie quarterback C.J. Stroud made all the right calls in the biggest game of his NFL career to help the Houston Texans secure a playoff spot.

Stroud threw for 264 yards and two scores, Devin Singletary scored the go-ahead touchdown on a 3-yard TD run with 6:20 to play and the Texans came up with a late stop for a 23-19 victory over Indianapolis on Saturday night.

"Everybody's fighting till that last play, that's what it's about," coach DeMeco Ryans said as the Texans shouted and danced after earning their first playoff berth since 2019.. "We punched our ticket."

Now the waiting begins.

Houston (10-7) either will be one of the AFC's three wild-card teams or host a wild-card weekend game as the AFC South champs—if Jacksonville loses at Tennessee.

Indianapolis (9-8) was eliminated from the playoff chase with its third loss in five weeks. It hasn't made the postseason since 2020.

Reaching the postseason sure hasn't been easy for Houston with a new head coach, a new quarterback, a short-handed receiving corps and needing a win at a venue where the Texans had only won four times in the previous 20 seasons.

Still, Houston finished the job Saturday with a strong performance—and a little help from Indy.

A blown coverage allowed Stroud to throw a 75-yard TD pass to Nico Collins on the Texans' first play. Hours later, Colts running back Tyler Goodson was wide open when he dropped a pass on fourth-and-1 from the Houston 15 with 1:06 to go.

"We all have plays that we want back. Just because it's the last one makes it that much more significant," Colts quarterback Gardner Minshew said about the fourth-down call. "I told him (Goodson) I'd throw that ball every time. I trust him."

Stroud finished 20 of 26 with no turnovers and hooked up with Collins nine times for 195 yards and the score. Stroud has with a passer rating of 134.1.

For Indy, it was an odd night full of close calls.

In the first half, the Colts struggled to move the ball, struggled to contain Stroud and rarely tried to stretch the field.

In the second half, they leaned heavily on Jonathan Taylor, who had his best game of the season—30 carries for 188 yards and a 49-yard TD run early in the third quarter that led to a nifty 2-point conversion from Minshew to Mo Alie-Cox that tied it at 14.

But he injured his ankle and foot in the second half, went briefly to the locker room, then returned for Indy's final series only to be out of the game on the fateful fourth-down play. Coach Shane Steichen said that was by design.

Steichen's other big gamble didn't pay off, either. He opted to try a 57-yard field goal midway through the third quarter that would have broken the 14-14 tie, but Matt Gay's kick hit the right upright and five plays later Ka'imi Fairbairn made a 51-yarder to give Houston a 17-14 lead.

Indy tied it on Gay's 35-yard field goal on the ensuing drive, but Stroud responded with a 12-play, 73-yard drive that took more than seven minutes off the clock and ended with Singletary's TD run.

Minshew was 13 of 24 for 141 yards.

"It wasn't pretty, but it was gritty," Ryans said. "We fought and found a way to get it done."

The Colts thought they would open the fourth quarter facing third-and-1 from the Houston 24, but Steichen challenged the call. When the challenge resulted in a first down, the refs put 45 seconds back on the clock and the players, who had just changed ends, had down field again for one more play to finish the third quarter. Then they changed ends again after the play.

Then in the fourth quarter, a flag was thrown because Indy had too many players on the field. After the snap, the refs waved off the penalty and announced they would have a do-over.

STEELERS 17, RAVENS 10

BALTIMORE (AP)—Cameron Heyward figures the Pittsburgh Steelers can make some noise in the playoffs.

They still need a little help to get in, but they've certainly done their part down the stretch.

"Let us be dangerous," said Heyward, the Pittsburgh defensive tackle. "We have a formula that's working right now. Hopefully we can get some guys back in the fold. We're not going to discount ourselves. We know we've got work to do, and looking forward to it."

Mason Rudolph threw a 71-yard touchdown pass to Diontae Johnson on the first play of the fourth quarter, and the Steelers took a step toward the postseason with a 17-10 victory over the Baltimore Ravens on Saturday.

Rudolph led Pittsburgh (10-7) to three straight wins to close the season, and now the Steelers wait. They would make the playoffs Sunday if Buffalo loses to Miami, or Jacksonville loses to Tennessee.

There was some bad news for the Steelers amid all that hope. T.J. Watt—who had two sacks to take sole possession of the NFL lead with 19—left in the third quarter with a knee injury. Coach Mike Tomlin didn't have an update on Watt's status after the game.

The Ravens (13-4) already had the top seed in the AFC locked up, and they held MVP favorite Lamar Jackson out of this game, along with a handful of other key players. Tyler Huntley started at quarterback, and both teams had a hard time moving the ball on a rainy, windy day.

"We had a chance to send them home, now they have a chance to go to the playoffs," Baltimore linebacker Patrick Queen said. "It stings a little bit ... but we have a lot of pages in our book that set us up pretty good. Nobody's hanging their head or anything. If we see those guys again, we'll be ready."

With the score tied at 7, Rudolph found Johnson over the middle for the one big play Pittsburgh needed. After Baltimore's Gus Edwards lost a fumble, the Steelers kicked a field goal with 3:13 remaining. The Ravens hadn't trailed by more than seven points all season until then.

Justin Tucker kicked a field goal with 16 seconds left, but Baltimore couldn't come up with the ensuing onside kick. The Ravens had a six-game winning streak snapped.

Rudolph was 18 of 20 for 152 yards.

"It was probably the most challenging weather I've had to deal with in my career," Rudolph said.

Each team lost two fumbles.

Pittsburgh opened the scoring on a 6-yard touchdown run by Najee Harris in the first quarter. The Ravens didn't manage a first down until the second, but they eventually tied it on a 27-yard scoring pass from Huntley to Isaiah Likely.

The Steelers have won seven of the last eight meetings with Baltimore, all of which were decided by seven points or fewer. Pittsburgh's four consecutive wins at M&T Bank Stadium are the most by a visiting team since the Steelers themselves won five straight from 1998-2002.

Analysis: Resting starters is an easy decision in the NFL

By ROB MAADDI
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

Resting starters to prevent injuries ahead of the playoffs is an easier decision in the NFL.

Football is too violent to worry about a long layoff causing rust.

If coaches have an opportunity to give key players, especially quarterbacks, a game off with playoff seeds or positioning locked in, most are going to take it. And, they should.

The Dolphins lost edge rusher Bradley Chubb to a season-ending knee injury in the final minutes of a 56-19 loss to Baltimore last week. Coach Mike McDaniel said he regretted keeping Chubb in the game with the outcome already decided. It served as a reminder for other coaches going into the final game of the regular season.

There's too much risk in a physical sport. Just look at all the QBs who sustained significant injuries this season from Aaron Rodgers and Kirk Cousins to Joe Burrow and Justin Herbert.

That's why QBs Lamar Jackson, Brock Purdy, Patrick Mahomes, Matthew Stafford and Joe Flacco are among several starters sitting out Week 18.

They can get their reps in practice to stay sharp and safely watch from the sideline this weekend.

But, coaches can't rest everyone. They still need 48 players to dress for the games.

"What's unique about this time is that different than the preseason, your numbers are a little bit limited and so I don't think you can go into a game without feeling like, hey guys are going to go play," Rams coach Sean McVay said. "You have to be able to continue to take steps in the right direction. The fortunate thing for us is that because. ... we're already in the playoffs, you can look at it possible six or seven seed, it does offer an opportunity to be able to rest some guys."

Carson Wentz will start at quarterback instead of Stafford for Los Angeles when the Rams (9-7) visit San Francisco (13-3). Running back Kyren Williams, wide receiver Cooper Kupp, tight end Tyler Higbee, tackle Joe Noteboom, defensive lineman Aaron Donald and linebacker Ernest Jones also won't play.

"I'm excited about Carson's opportunity. Obviously, a guy that's had a lot of success in this league," McVay said. "He'll have the full offensive line and some really good players around him. Just excited to be able to see him go compete, do his thing. But when you look at the totality of it, just balancing what do you think is best and there's not a perfect solution, especially when you're talking about, alright, 53 guys, 48 active."

The 49ers and Ravens have clinched the No. 1 seeds so any players they rest this week won't play again until Jan. 20-21. Purdy, the NFC's starting Pro Bowl QB, is the only player coach Kyle Shanahan plans to keep out mainly because he has to field a team for the game and roster restrictions plus currently having five injured players won't allow him to rest too many starters.

"It's not about the rusty, it's about one, how you pull off a game," he said. "Rusty isn't always about the game. Rusty is how you treat the week. The game is how you treat the week. The game is 3 1/2 hours of, to me, what unfolded throughout the week and then you just get to cut it loose. So, that you've got to play accordingly. You've got to watch how the game's going and be as smart as you can. I also think people win in playoff games because you're a team."

Jackson and star receiver Odell Beckham Jr. are among the guys sitting for Baltimore along with several players dealing with injuries.

"Just all things considered, it seemed to be the right thing to do," Ravens coach John Harbaugh said about resting Jackson.

No Jackson benefits Baltimore's opponent. The Steelers (9-7) need a win to keep their playoff hopes alive and will face backup QB Tyler Huntley instead of the MVP favorite.

"The guys playing in the game are going to give it all they have," Harbaugh said. "You have to. And the guys playing the game want to win each play, and they want to win the game. ... We're playing a division rival, so you know what goes with that."

Spoiling another team's playoff hopes is fun. Staying healthy is the priority.

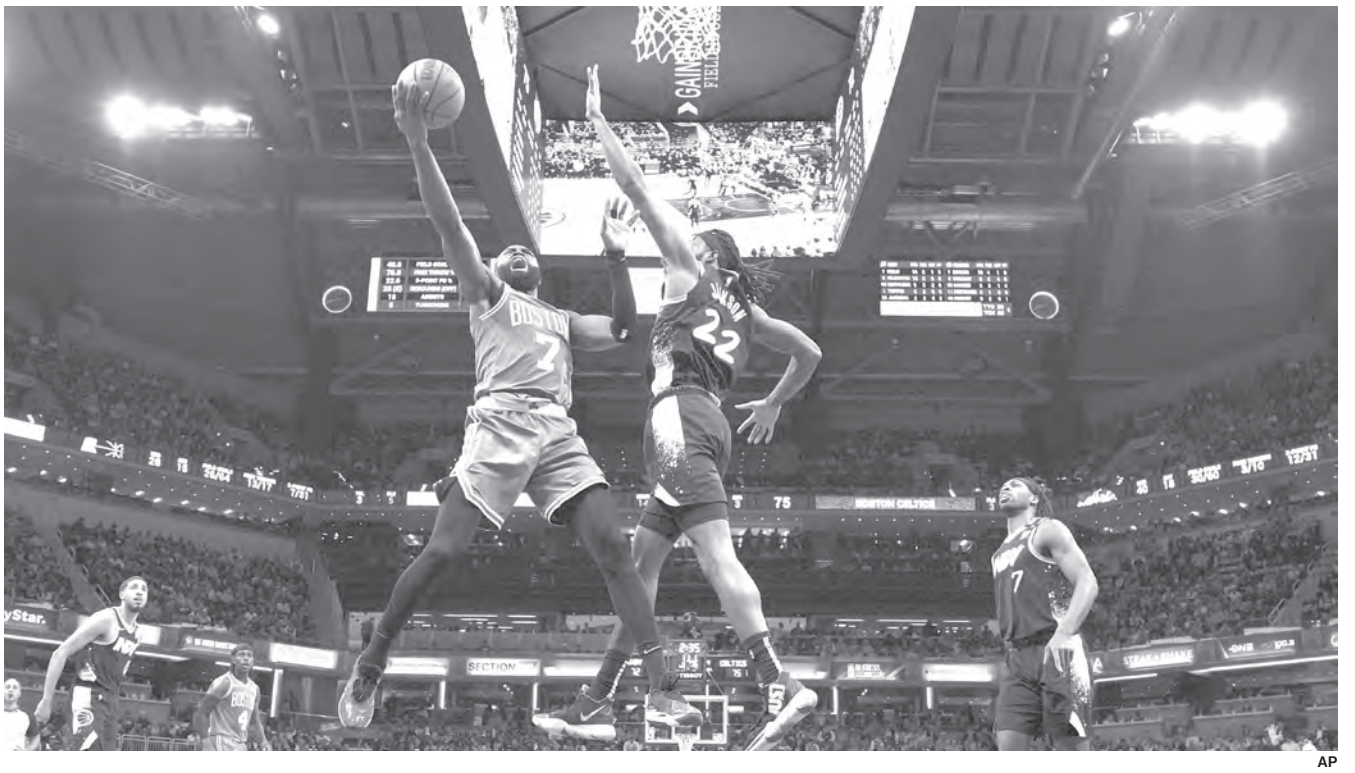
Tatum, Brown power Celtics to 118-101 win over Pacers

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Jayson Tatum scored 38 points, making a season-high eight 3-pointers, and Jaylen Brown added 31 points as the Boston Celtics beat the Indiana Pacers 118-101 on Saturday night, snapping the Pacers' six-game winning streak.

Tatum, who also had 13 rebounds and six assists, combined with Brown for 27 of the Celtics' 46 baskets on a night they shot 51% from the field and never trailed.

"(Indiana) is really good," Boston coach Joe Mazzulla said. "When we play connected basketball, with physical half-court defense and intentional, poised offense, we play better, and that's kind of what we did."

Boston, which came into the game third in the NBA in field-goal percentage defense (.449) and third in rebound rate, limited the Pacers to a season-low point total and outrebounded them 70-42.



AP

Boston Celtics guard Jaylen Brown (7) shoots around Indiana Pacers forward Isaiah Jackson (22) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis, Saturday, Jan. 6, 2024.

Bennedict Mathurin led Indiana with 20 points while All-Star Tyrese Haliburton finished with 17 points, seven assists, six rebounds and five steals.

"We missed a lot of shots," Haliburton said. "They're a really good defensive team, but we shot a lot of shots that we like. Just didn't capitalize on them."

Boston held a 29-17 advantage at the end of the opening period, the Pacers' lowest-scoring first quarter of the season. The Celtics opened up a 16-point lead in the second quarter and led 58-49 at halftime despite not attempting a free throw in the half. Tatum and Brown shot a combined 16 of 27 for 37 points before intermission.

"Me and Joe watch a lot of film together," Tatum said. "It's just finding ways to be aggressive. Play in space. Play off actions."

Indiana cut its deficit to 84-81 entering the fourth quarter, but the Celtics led by as many as 19 in the final quarter and cruised down the stretch. Boston received only six minutes from starting center Kristaps Porzingis, who left the game due to an eye laceration.

It was the latest chapter in an eventful season series thus far.

In the first meeting, on Nov. 1 in Boston, the Celtics beat the Pacers 155-104 as Haliburton sat out due to injury. Boston's point total was the franchise's highest since 1959. In a hotly contested rematch on Dec. 4, Indiana prevailed 122-112 to knock the visiting Celtics out of the NBA's inaugural in-season tournament behind Haliburton's first career triple-double.

Indiana played without starting shooting guard Bruce Brown (bone bruise in right knee) and reserve guard Andrew Nembhard (back sprain).

JAZZ 120, 76ERS 109

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Lauri Markkanen had 33 points and 13 rebounds, and Collin Sexton added 22 points and 10 assists to lead Utah past Philadelphia.

Reigning MVP and two-time defending scoring champion Joel Embiid missed the game for Philadelphia because of swelling in his left knee.

The 76ers not only suffered a 36-point defeat to the Knicks on Friday, they lost Embiid and also Tobias Harris to an ankle injury. The Sixers also played without key rotation players De'Anthony Melton (lumbar spine soreness) and Robert Covington (illness).

Tyrese Maxey led the 76ers with 25 points and Kelly Oubre Jr. had 24. Philadelphia fell to 2-6 without Embiid.

KNICKS 121, WIZARDS 105

WASHINGTON (AP)—Julius Randle scored 39 points, Jalen Brunson had 33 and New York won its fourth straight game, beating Washington.

Coming off an impressive 128-92 win at Philadelphia on Friday night, the Knicks (21-15) led throughout and had a 60-34 lead late in the first half, causing the thousands of New York fans in Washington to loudly chant: "Let's go Knicks! Let's go Knicks!"

Randle's 39 points were two off his season high. Isaiah Hartenstein had 19 rebounds for the Knicks.

Kyle Kuzma scored 27 points but the Wizards lost their fourth straight. Deni Avdija had 23.

ROCKETS 112, BUCKS 108

HOUSTON (AP)—Alperen Sengun scored 21 points and Houston overcame 48 points from Giannis Antetokounmpo to beat Milwaukee.

Antetokounmpo shot 16 of 25 from the field and added 17 rebounds in his seventh straight double-double. But the Bucks lost for the third time in four games to start 2024 after going 11-2 in December.

Jalen Green scored 16 points for Houston. Fred VanVleet had 14 points and seven assists, and Jabari Smith Jr. added 14 points and 12 rebounds.

Damian Lillard had 18 points and nine assists in a poor-shooting night. He missed a season-high three free throws, on 10 attempts, and went 5 for 16 from the field, including 1 for 8 from 3.

Veteran Rockets reserve Jeff Green had a season-high 16 points. Cam Whitmore added 12 off the bench and Aaron Holiday had 11. The Rockets' bench outscored Milwaukee's 43-22.

Rubio says his NBA career is over, steps away from Cavs to work on mental health

CLEVELAND (AP)—With uncommon vision on the basketball court, Ricky Rubio could make a basic pass look extraordinary.

A true playmaker, he made everyone around him better. Rubio was the same off the floor, a positive force for teammates, coaches and fans, who will certainly miss his presence.

After stepping away from his playing career—and the Cleveland Cavaliers—this season to address mental health issues that he's still working on, Rubio said Thursday that his NBA career is over after 12 seasons.

The 33-year-old Rubio, who has also had a distinguished international career playing with Spain, alluded to his recent struggles while adding that he's "doing much better and getting better every day."

Rubio's announcement on X, formerly known as Twitter, came after he and the Cavs came to an agreement on a contract buyout. The team will get some financial relief from his $6.1 million this year and his $6.4 million deal for 2024-25.

"Ricky Rubio embodied everything a franchise would want from such an accomplished player, who helped instill a confidence and leadership quality that still resonates within our team," said Koby Altman, the team's president of basketball operations. "When you measure his impact, particularly during the 2021-22 season, Ricky was instrumental in our 22-win improvement that year.

"His willingness to mentor our younger players speaks to the gravity of his tenure in Cleveland and the success we are having with this current Cavaliers group. We wish Ricky nothing but the best and remain supportive of his decision to continue focusing on his mental health."

Rubio has spent the past two seasons recovering from a torn knee ligament, an injury that was not only a personal blow but a major setback for a Cleveland team he had helped get turned around following consecutive 19-win seasons.

Rubio was limited to just 33 games last season, and had lost any explosiveness following his second ACL injury.

He didn't report to training camp this season, and Rubio posted on social media that "July 30th was one of the toughest nights of my life."

"My mind went to a dark place. I kind of knew I was going on that direction, but I've never thought I wasn't under control of the situation. The next day, I decided to stop my professional career."

Rubio said he hopes to share his experiences going forward "so I can help support others going through similar situations. Until then, I would like to keep it private out of respect for my family and myself, as I'm still working on my mental health."

Rubio had a major impact in his first season with Cleveland as his veteran presence helped many of the team's young players, and he was able to reunite with good friend and former teammate Kevin Love, himself a mental health advocate.

Rubio has been on the international basketball stage since he was a teenager, first catching the eye of scouts and fans as a 14-year-old hoops prodigy. He won an Olympic silver medal in 2008, a bronze in 2012 and was named FIBA World Cup MVP in 2019.

He was drafted in the first round by the Minnesota Timberwolves in 2009 and spent seven seasons with the team before going to Utah.

Rubio thanked all his teams, especially Cleveland, led by Altman and coach J.B. Bickerstaff.

"My last home," Rubio wrote. "I know the way things ended have been tough. I could never have imagined the year would develop this way, but you have an amazing organization, with Koby and JB, who have been extremely respectful and understanding of my situation and caring for me as a person."

Green reinstated from suspension by NBA after missing 12 games

NEW YORK (AP)—Draymond Green was reinstated by the NBA from his suspension on Saturday after the Golden State star missed 12 games for hitting Phoenix center Jusuf Nurkic in the face on Dec. 12.

The league said Green "demonstrated his commitment to conforming his conduct to standards expected of NBA players" during his suspension, which began Dec. 14. He has met with a counselor as well as had multiple joint meetings with representatives of the league, the Warriors and the National Basketball Players Association.

Those meetings, the league added, will continue throughout the season.

The Warriors have gone 7-5 without Green, who also was suspended for five games in November for placing Minnesota center Rudy Gobert in a headlock.

The league noted Green's "repeated history of unsportsmanlike acts" when handing out the most recent punishment. The four-time NBA champion also was suspended after stepping on the chest of Sacramento's Domantas Sabonis in last season's playoffs.

After agreeing to a new $100 million deal with the Warriors last summer, Green lost nearly $1.9 million in salary during the suspension.

Golden State's next game is Sunday at home against Toronto.

The Warriors certainly need Green on the floor more often. They are scuffling along at 17-18 this season, 10th in the Western Conference, just two years removed from their most recent championship. Green has played in just 15 games and the Warriors are 10-10 in the games he has missed—including two for an ankle sprain and another for personal reasons.

Rotary holds inaugural End Polio Cycling Challenge

The Rotary Club of Saipan will be holding the Inaugural RCS- End Polio Cycling Challenge, a bike race that aims to raise funds to support the Rotarians' world-wide "End Polio Now" campaign and to welcome Rotary International District 2750 governor Yoichiro Miyazaki to the island.

The bike race is set for Jan. 20 and coincides with the same week of Miyazaki's visit, as the Tokyo, Japan resident will be on Saipan from Jan. 19 to 21.

Miyazaki oversees District 2750's 98 Rotary clubs, including RCS, and close to 4,500 Rotarians.

An avid biker, Miyazaki uses his passion for this sport to raise awareness for "End Polio Now" initiative. Rotary clubs across the world have been raising funds for over 35 years to get rid of polio.

Being a founding partner of the "Global Polio Eradication Initiative," efforts by Rotarians were instrumental in helping government officials make policy decisions that led to contributions of over $10 billion to support the campaign. For the Inaugural RCS-End Polio Cycling Challenge, all proceeds will be donated for the cause.

MAKOTO AYANO

Following the success of the 2023 Hell of the Marianas, the Rotary Club of Saipan will be holding the Inaugural RCS-End Polio Cycling Challenge on Jan. 20.

The bike race will start and end at Banzai Cliff and features three courses—30K (long course), 20K (short), and 400m (for U12 bikers). The 30K course will have bikers heading to Saipan Select and Bird Island before returning to Banzai, while the 20K course's turnaround point is Saipan Select.

The shortest race—400m—will be within the vicinity of Banzai Cliff. Riders can choose from the following categories: E-bike, mountain bike, and road bike. There will be six age groups for the races, namely U12, U30, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60-and-above. Entry fee is $15.

For winners selection, RCS will award the overall top finisher (men's and women's) in the 20K and 30K events. The Top 3 finishers (men's and women's) per category and age group will also be recognized, while each participant who will complete the race will receive finishers shirt. Check-in time is at 5:30am, while the race will kick off at 6:30am.

Raffle tickets will also be sold as additional support to the "End Polio Now" initiative. Raffle tickets will be three for $5 and prizes include a variety of gift certificates and a Samsung A7 tablet. Raffle tickets can be purchased from any member of the Interact, Rotaract or Rotary Club of Saipan.

Registration, on the other hand, can be done at Bike Pro, The Bike Shop, Latte Built, or MegaByte. Online registration is also available at www.webscorer.com/register?raceid=339057 with payments received on site or can be turned over upon race kit pick-up on Friday, Jan. 19, from 5pm to 7pm, at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

For more information on the bike race, raffle tickets or to donate, reach out to event chair Charles Cepeda at charlesvcepeda@gmail.com or call (670) 483-6435. ***(PR)***

PROSPECTS

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the winners' bracket with an undefeated record of five wins.

Madflex 1 consisted of Jezpher Navarro, Jonne Navarro, Onick Ragbonshe, and Christian Lucero. They cruised through the tourney, beating Rollers teams and other Madflex teams—defeating Rollers 1, 13-5 in the semis.

The tourney was organized by Prospects assistant coach, Matt Duenas.

He said after the awarding that he wanted to host this tournament for the youth. The tournament was supposed to be held last Christmas, but there were some issues and was pushed to January instead.

Duenas said he chose the 13U and 16U age divisions because, "I just wanted the kids to come out and showcase their skills, and also keep them away from any negative stuff out there, keep them busy, and let them play what they love to play."

There were about 104 participants in the three-day tourney from different basketball clubs such as Madflex, Rollers, Prospects, and some school teams.

He added that future tourneys will also be in a 3x3 format as it's a much faster gameplay and also lets a lot more children play. He also said that a meeting will be held to see whether other ball clubs will be hosting future monthly tourneys.

Duenas thanked the sponsors Bridge Capital LLC, Priority Care, and Saipan Ice & Water, and also Ada Gym for the ideal venue.

LEIGH GASES

Madflex 1's Christian Lucero goes for a layup against Rollers 1 in their finals matchup of the 16U division in the Matt Duenas 3x3 Youth Tournament last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

LEIGH GASES

Matt Duenas, third from left, poses with champions of the 13U division, Prospects 1, during the awarding of the Matt Duenas 3x3 Youth Tournament last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

LEIGH GASES

Prospects 1's Leon Duenas at the free throw line during their finals game against Prospects 4 in the 13U division of the Matt Duenas 3x3 Youth Tournament last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

B

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what happened. Time was running out and I just took the shot and it went in, thank God."

The B League started last Nov. 15 and ended last Wednesday with Alliana's crowned as champions. Legends took second place and third place was Bourbon Bar & Cafe.

Before this league, the Inaugural SMEC-SMLEG Invitational Basketball Tournament 2023 was held also at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court, with Checkpoint and A Plus Team winning the championships in their respective categories.

LEIGH GASES

Championship team Alliana's Jomar Tengco poses with his Mythical 5 Best Guard trophy and finals MVP trophy during the awards ceremony of the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational League last Wednesday at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

LEIGH GASES

Mythical 5 award winners pose with league commissioner Sonny Ebuen, right, during the awards ceremony of the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational League last Wednesday at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

Texans wrap up playoff spot with 23-19 victory over Colts.

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Prospects 1, Madflex 1 win 3x3 tourney

LEIGH GASES

Matt Duenas, left, organizer of the Matt Duenas 3x3 Youth Tournament, poses with champions of the 16U division, Madflex 1, along with sponsors of the event last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Prospects 1 and Madflex 1 outplayed several other teams in Matt Duenas' 3x3 Youth Tournament that was held from last Thursday to Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

In the 13U finals last Saturday, Prospects 1 outscored Prospects 4, 18-10, while in the 16U championships, Madflex defeated Rollers 2, 13-4. There were no game stats available.

Prospects 1 was made up of Leon Dunas, David Apatang, Liam Wilson, and Jairus Pangilinan. They slipped past Rollers 1, 11-6 in the semis, and were in

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Team Skoba crowned as softball champs

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

After the three-day Clash of the Islands Softball Tournament last Dec. 28-30, Skoba was crowned champion over seven other CNMI teams and two Guam teams.

Skoba defeated CNMI's Team Mamaaw, 23-13, via run mercy rule in the finals last Dec. 30 at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field. There were no game stats available.

During the tourney, Skoba came out undefeated with five wins—4-0 in double elimination and 1-0 in the seeding game.

Skoba was made up of baseball players Pat Teno Jr., Eli Aughenbaugh, Anthony Salas, Nate Camacho, Poland Masaharu, Brian Camacho, Bear Alvarez, Jerald Cabrera, K.J. Villagomez, Peter Tenorio, James Benavente, Thorn Sablan, Ping Santos, Jay Kintol, and Keith Kintol.

The event was a friendship tourney between Guam and the CNMI, with Guam teams Dededank Baby Daddies, and High Rollerz, while CNMI teams also included Pound Town, Bat-titude, No Excuse, Blue Jays, Hoi Yeaah, and Bwiibwiis.

It was organized and hosted by the Dededank Baby Daddies, with a cash prize of $2,500.

Camron Takeo, organizer of the event, said that he organized the tournament with his friends from Guam. Bruce San Nicolas from the team Dededank Baby Daddies organized the two teams from Guam.

Takeo said that the Guam teams came to Saipan for a previous tourney and "saw how exciting and challenging the teams on Saipan played that made them want to come back. So, they planned to host their first Saipan tournament called the "Clash of the islands" and asked for my assistance in coordinating the field and bringing teams in to join in on the fun. In the end, it was a big success, that everyone enjoyed the games! We are hoping to do it again sometime soon!"

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Team Skoba poses for a photo after their championship win in the Clash of Islands Softball Tournament last Friday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

B League MVPs announced

LEIGH GASES

Championship team Alliana's Jobert Meriales was the season MVP, and poses with league commissioner Sonny Ebuen during the awards ceremony of the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational League last Wednesday at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The most valuable players of the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League were announced during the championship awards ceremony held last Wednesday night at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

The finals MVP was Alliana's Jomar Tengco for his clutch 3-pointer in the last minutes that took the lead from the Legends, while teammate Jobert Meriales was the season MVP for his consistency and overpowering performance.

The best coach award went to Alliana's coach/player Mark Matuguina.

The Mythical 5 awardees were given to the league's best players. Tengco and Legends' Jerome Directo were the season's best guards; Marlon Binuya and Jimboy Tabora were the best forwards; while Meriales claimed the best center title.

The sportsmanship title went to Johnny's Bar & Grill.

Tengco, after the finals, said that he was grateful for the award and happy for the championship. "The MVP award was just a bonus along with our championship," said the 35-year-old.

On how he felt shooting the crucial 3-pointer that put their team up against the Legends, he said, "I don't know

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